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**Deconstructing Perspectives of Sexual Grooming: Implications for Theory and Practice**

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# Deconstructing Perspectives of Sexual Grooming: Implications for Theory and Practice

Samantha Craven

**PhD**

**2009**



A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the University's  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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### **Abstract**

This study aims to contribute to our knowledge about the under researched area of sexual grooming, first of all, by reviewing the available literature to establish a baseline of understanding and secondly by considering three different perspectives, which expanded our understanding further. In depth interviews, lasting between one hour and a total time of approximately four hours, were conducted with five adult survivors of child sexual abuse, six child sex offenders and six police officers with child protection experience. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the interview data, which identified four main themes: vulnerability, offenders' self grooming, entrapment and grooming shadow. These themes highlighted an ecological view, which acknowledged the multiple factors influencing an individual's experience of childhood sexual abuse, and recognised the dynamic nature of sexual grooming, including its apparent link between childhood experience of this phenomenon and adulthood. Attribution and perceived power were the most significant influences within the sexual grooming process. The analysis was used to develop a new definition and two models of sexual grooming, which capture the complexity of this phenomenon. These models provide a framework within which to understand sexual grooming and furthermore to communicate this understanding to a non-academic audience. The Grooming 'Cycle' is of particular value with regard to raising public awareness, which is an important aspect as the research has revealed that child protection can only be effective if everybody takes responsibility for it.





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This research would not have been possible without the willingness and commitment of the interview participants to share their experiences. I am truly grateful that these individuals trusted me with their very personal stories. I would also like to thank the individuals and organisations that facilitated access to my interview populations.

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Lastly, my health has been a determining factor in my PhD progress however with the help of Mr Murphy and the team of nurses at Warwick Hospital I have been progressively well and thus able to submit. I would like to thank these fabulous people for their care and support in the challenge to treat their most perpetual patient.



## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 in England and Wales introduced new comprehensive legislation, which brought the law on sexual offences under one Act. More specifically Section 15 of the Act legislated against ‘meeting a child following sexual grooming’ and Section 123 introduced ‘risk of sexual harm orders’, both of which came in to force on the 1st May 2004. Despite its new legal status, the literature review presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis found that sexual grooming was not clearly defined or understood. A review of the available literature identified that sexual grooming involved grooming the child, the significant adults and environment, as well as contributing to offenders’ self-grooming. However, no definition was adequate to explain this phenomenon and so a new definition was proposed (see Chapter 9).

The earliest published reference to the term ‘grooming’ was made by Wolf in 1985. He proposed a cycle of sexual offending which included grooming. Despite the lack of an empirical evidence base to support the use of this term, his paper discussed ‘grooming’ as if it were a commonly used and understood term. Wolf (1985) worked for Northwest Treatment Associates and his theory evolved from his and others’ clinical work within the agency. Furthermore, Wyre (1987, cited in Howitt 1995), who was working at the same time, also adopted the term ‘grooming’. The finding that the earliest references to ‘grooming’ stem from two people that were at the forefront of treatment programme development suggests that treatment programmes were the medium through which this terminology evolved and from which arena it has become part of common parlance. Nevertheless this adoption has not been matched with sufficient research and empirical work to increase understanding of this phenomenon. Therefore, the current study contributes to this neglected area of research by considering different perspectives of sexual grooming, as experienced by adult survivors of child sexual abuse, child sex offenders and child protection police officers, and posed the questions ‘why’ and ‘how’ is sexual grooming successful in order to better understand ‘what sexual grooming is’.

Increased understanding of sexual grooming is essential to inform the implementation of the new legislation discussed above and furthermore to facilitate the prevention of child sexual abuse by identifying and targeting sexual grooming

before a child is physically harmed. Chapter 3 reviews the new legislation and highlights the potential problems regarding implementation and suggests that the scope of the legislation is significantly more limited and less preventative than had been intended. Furthermore, the practicalities of Sections 15 and 123 imply that it will most likely be applied to Internet related offences, even though abuse from a known, loved and trusted person is significantly more common. This chapter goes on to discuss the benefits of taking a public health approach to tackling child sexual abuse and highlights initiatives that have already proved successful. Chapter 2 and 3 have been published in peer-reviewed journals and have therefore been included in this thesis in the published format.

Chapter 4 outlines how this research was conducted via one-to-one interviews of five adult survivors, six incarcerated child sex offenders and six police officers with varying experience of child protection. The topic area is obviously very sensitive and so this chapter includes the ethical considerations encountered during this project. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of individual transcripts followed by consideration at the group level (see appendix 1 for copy of preliminary analysis at the group level). Ultimately, the research findings that combined this earlier analysis are presented in Chapters 5 - 8.

The research findings, which are presented in Chapters 5 - 8, incorporate four superordinate themes: Vulnerability, Self-grooming, Entrapment and Grooming Shadow. These themes highlighted an ecological view of vulnerability, which exists at the personal, cultural and societal level and as such emphasise the factors that increase a child's vulnerability that are not dependent on the offender and calls for everyone to take responsibility for child protection. The later three themes indicate the significant role of attribution and perceived power in victims' and offenders' experiences of sexual grooming and points to a significant relationship between experiences of sexual grooming in childhood and its continued influence in adulthood. Recovery from child sexual abuse and also treatment following the commission of child sexual abuse are both facilitated by an individual's perceived power. The function of internal and external attribution is not linear and the value of each varies depending on individual cases.

This analysis is discussed in relation to the literature, in Chapter 9, from which support is drawn and a new definition is offered that includes recognition of survivors' Grooming Shadow. Furthermore, the analysis is represented in two models: The Grooming 'Cycle' and The Grooming Process. It is proposed that the former is a useful tool to communicate the complexity of sexual grooming to a wider, non-academic audience and could therefore be used to raise public awareness. The latter model is more detailed and could be used as a framework to understanding individuals' experiences of child sexual abuse and sexual grooming. Further discussion considers how this research contributes to a public health response to child sexual abuse and suggests that reconstructing attributions and perceived power for victimisation and offending, following a better understanding of individuals' experience, may be of particular benefit. For clarity, the last chapter draws together the main conclusions of this thesis.

## **Chapter 2 - Review of the literature and theoretical considerations.**

Chapter 2 outlines a review of the available literature in order to establish the existing understanding about sexual grooming, including consideration of how prominent theories of sexual offending account for this phenomenon. This review concludes with a proposal of a new definition of sexual grooming that incorporates the different elements highlighted in the review. This chapter was submitted in early 2006 and subsequently published in *The Journal of Sexual Aggression* in November 2006 and as such is presented in the form of a published paper.































## Addendum to Chapter 2

This Addendum has been added because there have been more recent developments in the sexual offending theory arena with the publication of the Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (ITSO) (Ward & Beech 2006), which was not included in the literature review in Chapter 2 because it was not available at the time of writing. This theory represents significant progress in theories of sexual offending. ITSO suggests that sexual offending is dependent on brain development and ecological factors, both proximal and distal. ITSO recognises that brain development and ecological factors feed into the interlocking neuropsychological functions through biological functioning and social learning. These functions include motivation, regulation, perception and memory. In the ITSO these neuropsychological functions are proposed to manifest as clinical symptoms. The ITSO then states that a maintenance and escalation cycle is created, which feeds back into an offender's vulnerability. This theory relates particularly to the offenders' self-grooming, but the other types of sexual grooming are likely to be significantly affected by the offenders' self-grooming and the factors mentioned above.

For clarity a table of the types of sexual grooming tactics discussed in Chapter 2 is presented below – see Table 1.

**Table 1 - Types of Sexual Grooming Tactics**

<b>Type of Sexual Grooming</b>	<b>Description of associated tactics</b>
<b>Self-grooming</b>	Justification or denial of thoughts and actions, which may manifest through cognitive distortions or implicit theories. This can lead to implicit or explicit planning regarding their offence chain.
<b>Grooming the environment and significant adults</b>	This is important in order to gain access to a potential victim(s) and may involve obtaining a position of trust, so that offenders have the opportunity to offend.  Attempts to avoid disclosure can include isolation of victim and/or mother as well as discrediting these individuals so that any disclosure has less credibility.

<b>Grooming the child</b>	Both physical and psychological aspects are used to groom the child, which aims to gain compliance and avoid disclosure. Physical Grooming involves gradual desensitisation to touch and sexualisation of the contact. Psychological Grooming is used to achieve this increased sexualisation through the use of bribes and threats. Offenders often make the victim feel responsible for their abuse, so they will not disclose.
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### **Chapter 3 - Current responses to sexual grooming: Implication for prevention.**

Chapter 3 outlines the current responses to sexual grooming in terms of its legal status and supposedly preventative approach. A lack of understanding and poor definition, highlighted in Chapter 2, is also prevalent in relation to the new legal position of sexual grooming, which limits its scope. Chapter 3 warns against the current preoccupation with Internet grooming, which risks causing similar distractions and misinformation as the old 'stranger danger' campaigns. This chapter concludes by stating that prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than a legislative response and supports the need for a public health response to prevention. In October 2005 this chapter was submitted and subsequently published in The Howard Journal in February 2007 and as such is presented in the form of a published paper. Chapter 2 and 3 together highlight the need for a greater understanding of sexual grooming in order to inform theory and practice. Chapter 4 outlines how this research aims to contribute to this process.





























## **Chapter 4 - Methodology**

The previous two chapters have outlined how the term ‘grooming’ is used in the professional, legal and public domains, yet it is not widely understood. Furthermore these chapters highlighted the need to understand this phenomenon because of its prevalence and inclusion in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which introduced an offence of ‘meeting a child following sexual grooming’ (Section 15). Primarily, this phenomenon needs to be understood in order to facilitate a more proactive approach to child protection and the prevention of child sexual abuse. The previous two chapters set out to establish what knowledge and understanding already existed in the available literature, but further understanding is required and the available literature represented just one source of information and one perspective from which understanding about this phenomenon could be drawn.

The qualitative research, hereafter, sought to increase awareness about sexual grooming by consulting three further perspectives and drawing on the experiences of adult survivors of child sexual abuse who had been directly affected by sexual grooming, child sex offenders who had used sexual grooming, and police officers because they come in to contact with both victims and offenders following disclosure – as such, they have numerous examples of sexual grooming being used and experience of how victims and offenders talk about their experiences following disclosure. The limited previous research has considered the victims’ and offenders’ perspectives individually (Conte 1991; Pryor 1996 respectively), but did not consider multiple perspectives. The current research set out to do just this. The strength of this research design is that it provided a form of triangulation of experiences (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie 1999). The following sections outline the details of how this study was conducted and provides justification for the chosen methodology.

### **Qualitative versus Quantitative**

Sexual grooming is not something that research can access directly as this would be unethical, because once identified sexual grooming would need to be reported to the relevant authorities and ended in order to protect the child or children involved. It is, therefore, necessary to find other ways to study this phenomenon, for example

retrospectively through the accounts of people that have some experience of sexual grooming.

It seems unsatisfactory to simply quantify experiences of sexual grooming, particularly as little is known about this phenomenon and because individual experiences are so varied. Furthermore, the previous literature has provided an overview of what kinds of behaviours sexual grooming involves and thus further quantification at this stage would not contribute to our understanding about this phenomenon. This is specifically because quantitative research can only investigate the variables that are included in the research design, which in turn is limited by what is already known. In fact, by quantifying such experiences it is possible that the most interesting and useful aspects of the phenomenon would be lost. Therefore, qualitative research is a useful tool for generating new research in an area (Willig 2001) and, hence, can be used to explore people's experiences of sexual grooming without findings being limited to what is already known about this phenomenon.

A researcher's epistemological position is important as this has a significant influence on the choice of methodology (Langridge 2004). The realist epistemological position asserts that there is an objective truth and subsequently research from this perspective seeks to identify the one true reality. In contrast, the relativist epistemological position maintains that there are only versions of reality. In agreement with Smith (1999), my epistemological position is somewhere in between and reflects that of critical realism. This position purports that an objective reality exists and that it can be differentiated into three levels: the empirical level - experienced events; the actual level - all events, whether experienced or not; the causal level - the mechanisms which generate events (Houston 2001). Therefore it is assumed that what people say has some relationship with reality (Smith 1996), at least as they experience it. As Kvale (1996) considers the important reality to be what people perceive it to be. Warnock (1987, cited in Smith 2004: 42) proposed that 'delving deeper in to the particular also takes us closer to the universal' and to a 'shared humanity' (Smith 2004: 43). Therefore, by considering the subjective truths of individuals, it is possible to get a more accurate view of 'reality'.

Qualitative analysis looks beyond the observable behaviour to the process and underlying structures or mechanisms, which reflect the causal level indicated above

and often are not open to direct perception (Houston 2001). However, Bhaskar (1998, cited in Houston 2001) considers them to exist because they cause events to occur. Moreover, qualitative methodology provides a means of studying social interaction ‘from the bottom up’ (Willig 2001) and thus allows the study of that which is not directly observable and is therefore inductive rather than hypothesis testing, because it avoids imposing prior assumptions and theories on to the data. Critical realism is not deterministic and so does not attempt to predict outcomes and behaviour and instead focuses on ‘identification, analysis and explanation of psychological and societal mechanisms and their causal tendencies’ (Houston 2001). Henwood and Pidgeon (1994, cited in Clegg, Standen, & Jones 1996) view qualitative methodology as being an important way of understanding the complexities of human experiences. Sexual grooming is surely complex and thus requires an in-depth investigation, an approach that has been employed in this research.

Qualitative research does not attempt to eliminate extraneous variables, but rather embraces them as important to the experience. This consideration tends to give qualitative research more ecological validity because it attempts to understand the phenomenon in a real world context. Sexual grooming relies on the interaction between the individuals involved; thus this context is important to our understanding because sexual grooming does not exist independently of these factors. Therefore qualitative methodology facilitates a fuller understanding of sexual grooming through the increased likelihood of accessing ‘true’ representations of the participants’ experiences. In turn this may increase the potential for generalisability, but this can only be validated through replication of findings both in similar settings and with different populations. In addition, the role of the researcher is regarded as vital because he or she needs to actively engage in the process in order to obtain the ‘truth’ (Langridge 2004). The researcher’s role is made explicit through the provision of reflexivity.

Individual experiences of sexual grooming differ, leading to a variety of perspectives of the sexual grooming process and experience. In addition, these may vary according to an individual’s role in the process. A qualitative study of these perspectives will provide the richest data to advance current understanding of sexual

grooming and to facilitate our ability to identify it and thus help to prevent child sexual abuse where an offender uses sexual grooming.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

As discussed above, it is not possible to access the phenomenon of sexual grooming directly. It is only possible to study this phenomenon retrospectively through people's experience of it. It is therefore important to hear people's stories relating to their experience of sexual grooming. This data may be collected through interview or participants' written accounts. To aid people in the reporting of their experiences, it seemed more appropriate to use an interview format, so as to guide interviewees and help them focus on the subject under study.

Kvale (1996) describes two approaches to exploration via interview – exploration as a miner or as a traveller. The miner metaphor views knowledge as being present and waiting to be discovered by the miner. This knowledge remains constant throughout the interview, transcription and analysis process and is not contaminated by the miner. On the other hand, the traveller metaphor views the interview as a journey, through which the interviewer can develop a greater understanding of the interviewee's experiences. The current study adopts the latter approach because the author's epistemological position asserts that it is not possible to access reality or knowledge directly, but rather it is possible to access someone's perception of their experiences. This involves a two way interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, both of whom are vital to the journey. This research acknowledges the potential impact of the researcher on the outcome of this study (see section on reflexivity below).

The interview situation also allowed the interviewer to follow up novel lines of enquiry at the time of the interview, which significantly increased the quality of the data, particularly given the exploratory nature of the study. Data collection would have been possible via focus group or individual interviews. One-to-one interviews were adopted due to the sensitive topic under discussion and because they were more conducive to exploring individual experience, whereas focus group interviews may have been dominated by group level themes and dynamics (Smith 2004). However, it has been suggested that focus group interviews may encourage individual

disclosure (Wilkinson, 2003, cited in Smith 2004). In this case, particularly with the adult survivors, it was unlikely because of the personal nature of people's experiences. The finding that embarrassment featured a lot in relation to the adult survivors' abusive experiences vindicated this decision. The use of individual interviews aimed to maximise the participants' comfort during the interview and facilitate their willingness to disclose relevant information; thus, providing higher quality data.

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

The value of any research technique is dependent on the requirements of the study and the ability of a technique to provide meaningful and useful answers to the research question (Elliot *et al.* 1999). Grounded Theory (GT) and Discourse Analysis (DA) (narrative) were considered inappropriate for the current study, because DA restricts the analysis to the language used, with no speculation, as DA regards talk as behaviour in its own right and GT does not allow for going beyond what people say to what they actually mean (Giles 2002). The current study is much more concerned with individuals' experiences of sexual grooming and thus what they mean seems very important to understanding this. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), like the social cognition paradigm, asserts that verbal reports, cognition and physical states are connected (Smith *et al.* 1999) and that what the interviewee says has some ongoing significance for him or her. Although this connection is not transparent, IPA provides a natural way of investigating underlying psychological constructs (Smith 1995), whilst DA is sceptical about mapping what people say on to underlying cognitions (Smith 1995). This research sought to understand the role of underlying psychological constructs, where they were relevant to the grooming process, and as such the use of IPA enabled this.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is situated within the theoretical frameworks of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. A phenomenological perspective is concerned with studying people's experiences rather than objective reality *per se* (Smith 1996; Smith *et al.* 1999). The focus is on how individuals perceive a particular phenomenon, in this case sexual grooming. Symbolic interactionism relates to the meanings attached to particular experiences or



phenomenon; it recognises that social context mediates the development of these meanings (Smith 1996; Smith *et al.* 1999). Pryor (1996) describes symbolic interactionism and quotes Joel Charon's point that: everyone could be telling the truth; it is just that different people have varying understandings and perspectives of reality. Hence it is my view that it is methodologically valuable to consider many different perspectives of sexual grooming, as in the current study, and to consider the accounts provided by participants as a valuable 'truth' that can aid our understanding and future protection of children.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis allows one to take an insider's perspective (Conrad, 1987, cited in Smith *et al.* 1999), goes beyond description (Chamberlain 2000) and looks for subjective meaning. This is important in order to answer 'how' and 'why' questions rather than just 'what' questions (Chamberlain 2000). Willig (2001) argues that understanding requires interpretation. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis acknowledges that interpretation is necessary. Thus, IPA is reflexive, and subsequently recognizes the analysis' dependence on the researcher's viewpoint to make sense of and interpret individuals' experiences and associated meanings (Smith *et al.* 1999). Therefore the product of IPA is not the participants' experience *per se* but rather the researcher's interpretation of these experiences (Willig 2001). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is a double hermeneutic because the participant is trying to understand their experiences and the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of the world (Smith 2004). This analysis allows theory to be derived from the data of individuals' lived experiences rather than from data restricted by previous knowledge and hypothesis testing.

A major concern when using IPA is to ensure that the analysis goes beyond the descriptive surface level of analysis to a deeper more interpretative level (Smith 2004). It is not possible to achieve this level of analysis with large sample sizes, which is why a smaller sample size is required for IPA research; in fact, large sample sizes undermine the rationale for this kind of in-depth study (Yardley 2000). In a review of studies that had used IPA it was identified that these studies included sample sizes of between one and thirty (Brocki & Wearden 2006); however, there is a consensus emerging towards smaller sample sizes (Smith 2004). In this study, the total sample size was seventeen, which was sufficiently large enough to provide a

breadth of experience and small enough to enable the depth of analysis required when using IPA. The following section provides the details of how the sample was constructed.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis has been employed herein because I believe that this allowed for a much deeper reading of the data, particularly as it is specifically intended to understand people's lived experiences and, furthermore, its interpretative nature and acknowledgment that my role as the researcher was integral to the analytical process. As such and especially given the emotive topic under investigation, I believe that it is important for readers to understand what I as a person bring to this research. My reflexivity, which is presented at the end of this chapter, should inform the reader about my stand point and thus facilitate their reading of my analysis.

### **Sample**

The sample was made up of three different groups of individuals, with each group representing a different perspective based on their experiences of sexual grooming, either directly as in the case of the survivors of child sexual abuse and the child sex offenders or indirectly as in the case of the police officers, whose experience of sexual grooming is second-hand as they come into contact with victims/survivors and offenders following disclosure of child sexual abuse. Each group is presented below and a brief history of each participant is provided to inform the reader's comprehension of the analysis, specifically in relation to identifying the position of each participant within the data, because it is important to understand the research in context. All names have been changed in order to preserve individuals' anonymities. Other details which risk identifying the interviewee or anyone mentioned by the interviewee were also changed to protect confidentiality.

### **Survivors**

Five adult survivors of child sexual abuse took part in this study. They had all been sexually abused as children by one or more male perpetrators; thus, they all had experience of the sexual grooming process as it affected them. It is this experience that this research sought to explore. This sample is made up of three females and

two male interviewees. A total of six potential interviewees were approached to take part and whilst six agreed one of this six withdrew due to work commitments. All participants were adults aged between 25 and 50 years of age who had been abused as children, and were all willing to participate in the study if I believed that their experiences would be helpful and could possibly result in improved child protection and increased understanding about sexual grooming. At the beginning of the interviews each participant was given an information sheet which outlined the intentions of the study (see appendix 2). For reasons of clarity, I have provided brief details of each interviewee, see Table 2 below.

**Table 2 - Descriptions of the adult survivors in the current sample**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Caroline</b>	Caroline was sexually abused from infancy until her abuser died when she was about 15 years old. Her abuser lived with her family (Mother, Father and nine children including Caroline, although only four lived at home, the others were grown up and had left home), and despite the presence of her father it was thought that the abuser was her mother's boyfriend. No prosecution was ever brought against this offender due to his premature death. Caroline described her family as being dysfunctional and violent, and a place where she did not belong. Caroline was friendly and chatty, but admitted that she was largely cut off from the world. She was glad to take part in the research because she believed that it is important that people are made aware in order to help future victims.
<b>Jack</b>	Jack came from a Catholic family, for which church was an integral part of life. Jack was an altar-boy and regularly served Mass from the age of 5 years old. A young, newly ordained Priest, who was on holiday visiting his extended family, sexually abused Jack over a period of two months when Jack was 9 yrs old. To date, Jack's abuser has not been prosecuted due to lack of evidence, and at the time of the research he was still permitted to work as a teacher. Jack's family were very concerned about being good Catholic people, a pressure that plagued Jack for a long time. Jack believed it was important to take part in the research despite feeling a little nervous.
<b>Rachel</b>	Rachel was abused by her stepfather from infancy until the age of 10 or 11 years old. At the time she believed he was her father, but she subsequently found out that in fact it was her abuser's father that was her biological father. Her family was dysfunctional and violent, where abuse (physical, sexual, emotional and neglect) was normal. Prosecution of the offender was not carried forward due to lack of evidence. Rachel found her mother emotionally distant, but she had strong bonds with her siblings (2 brothers and 2 sisters), for whom she was predominantly the primary carer. Rachel's mother had herself been a victim of child sexual abuse and subsequent sexual and violent victimisation as an adult. Rachel felt fine about taking part in the

	research.
<b>Susan</b>	After leaving care to return home to her mother and step-father at the age of 10 years old, Susan's step-father sexually abused her until she left the family home at the age of 16 yrs. Susan's mother was physically and emotionally abusive to her, whilst Susan perceived that she had been caring towards her half-sister, who had always lived at home. Susan's mother was also largely apathetic towards her two sons, one of whom lived at home, and Susan became the primary carer for him. Susan described her mother as evil and considered that her stepfather was the nicer of the two. Susan has only disclosed her abuse to a limited number of people and a prosecution is not possible, as the offender has since died. Susan felt it was very important to take part in the research.
<b>Paul</b>	Paul stated that his parents were very violent and beat him as a child for as long as he could remember and as a consequence he craved the love and affection that he never received at home. A 16/17-year-old male neighbour sexually abused him from the age of 8 till he changed school and friends around the age of 11 years old. This teenager was perceived to be trustworthy and helpful and was often given babysitting responsibilities. Paul described his abuser as being isolated from his peer group because he spent a lot of time on his own in the house or entertaining his sister and her friends, of which Paul was one. His abuser gave Paul the attention that filled the void left by his parents. Paul disclosed his abusive experiences in prison when he was serving a sentence for rape of an adult woman. Paul felt that he could take part in the study because he had been having counselling.

Adult survivors were accessed using a purposive sampling technique, so individuals were selected because they were adult survivors of child sexual abuse. First of all, two individuals known to the researcher volunteered to be interviewed; ethical issues surrounding interviewing known individuals and other ethical considerations are discussed later in this chapter. Another interviewee approached the researcher following a research seminar, given at the preliminary stages of the research, which looked at the void in the literature and the need to conduct this research. Secondly, snowball sampling was used to access further adult survivors, who were then introduced to the researcher by existing interviewees. This was successful in recruiting one additional participant.

As part of the snowball sampling and recruitment process I produced a video, which provided an outline of the research project and my motivation and reasons for conducting the research. This was used by one of the existing interviewees as an informative tool to introduce other adult survivors to the research and invite them to

take part. Individuals were then given the researchers contact details, so that they could make contact if they decided they wanted to participate. One individual showed an interest in taking part but on the day of the interview he was unavailable due to work commitments and a further date was never established. It appeared that there was some resistance; therefore, the researcher sent one final email providing her contact details and simply left the door open for the individual to make contact if they decided that this was right.

The second male interviewee was recruited during the offender data collection because he was himself in prison. Whilst taking part in the sex offender treatment programme, following his conviction for the rape of an adult woman, he disclosed that he had been abused, so the prison officers asked him if he would like to meet me and he agreed. I met with him twice before the actual interview, firstly to introduce the research and secondly to allow him time to consider whether he wanted to participate. This helped build a level of trust and awareness before the interview.

### **Police officers**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the police sample. Initial contact with the Detective Sergeant (DS), who facilitated this section of the research, was provided by another senior police officer, who had facilitated a previous research project undertaken by the researcher. The DS at the child protection unit (CPU) taking part in this study gave permission for his officers to give some of their time to participate in the interviews. From the CPU there were three female interviewees and one male interviewee. It became apparent during the early interviews that it was necessary to interview officers from outside CPU because this would give another perspective due to the fact that their remit was different. The DS from the CPU facilitated access to the officers in the criminal investigation department (CID) and consequently a further two male officers were interviewed. In all, six police officers were interviewed.

Each officer was contacted by telephone and briefed about the research study, after which an interview date was set. At the beginning of the interviews each participant was given an information sheet which outlined the intentions of the study (see appendix 3). The police officers were motivated by the need to have a greater

understanding of sexual grooming. One of the police officers commented on how much time their boss had allowed for them to participate in the interviews, especially in light of their high workload. However, this officer went on to say that this demonstrated just how important developing a greater understanding of sexual grooming was. It is very important to note that the views expressed by the police officers in this research are their opinion and do not necessarily reflect the views of their force. A discussion about the ethical considerations is presented later in this chapter. Details about their years of experience are provided in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 - Descriptions of the police officers in this sample**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Level of experience</b>	<b>Description of the CID &amp; CPU roles</b>
<b>Dave</b>	Police experience 26 yrs CID experience 5 yrs	CID officers deal with extra-familial offences of abuse, non-carer pornography and most Internet related cases. Steve described them as ‘Jack of all trades’.
<b>Steve</b>	Police experience 19 yrs CID experience 12 yrs	
<b>Barry</b>	Police experience 6 yrs CPU experience 3 yrs	CPU officers deal with intra-familial abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, & neglect) or abuse perpetrated by a relative or carer, which includes step-parents and foster/adoptive parents. There are many more intra-familial offences like this.
<b>Jane</b>	Police experience 14 yrs CPU experience 5 yrs	
<b>Rose</b>	Police experience 11 yrs CPU experience 15 months	
<b>Eve</b>	Police experience 8 yrs CPU experience 2 yrs	

### **Child sex offenders**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of child sex offenders, who were in prison. Contact was made with the prison via the prison psychologist, to whom I was introduced via a mutual colleague. After gaining security clearance, I met with the staff working in the programmes department and they identified potential interviewees. This identification was based on prisoners who had undertaken the sex offender treatment programme (SOTP) and who were still residing in the prison. Seven potential interviewees were suggested from the remaining cohort of graduates from the core SOTP, which excluded people with a personality disorder, learning difficulties and anyone who was still considered to be in denial of their offences; the Prison Service’s exclusion criteria, as identified above, resulted in restrictions on the current sample.

The potential interviewees were then invited to meet with the researcher and to be introduced to the research concept and invited to participate. They were provided with an information sheet which outlined the research (see appendix 4), and a period of a few days to consider if they wanted to consent, after which another meeting was organised to discuss participation and allow the offenders to ask questions. All participants agreed; however, at a later time one participant withdrew. Therefore there were six male participants. Meeting the participants twice prior to interview aided a kind of rapport or familiarity that facilitated the interviews. For some of the offenders, taking part in the study was perceived by them as a way of giving something back and that it was worth it if it saved even one child from being abused or prevented potential offenders from offending. A discussion of the ethical considerations will be presented later in this chapter.

For clarity a description of each participant is presented in Table 4 below. Each of these descriptions was based on the accounts provided by the interviewees. The first five offenders also identified themselves as victims of child sexual abuse and the sixth offender reported not experiencing abuse as a child. As such the descriptions below include a brief account of the offenders' childhood and later offences.

**Table 4 - Descriptions of the child sex offenders in this sample**

Participant	Description
<b>John</b>	<p>John was one of four children. After his mother's death in 1963 he was sent to live with his grandmother whilst his sisters and brother were adopted or fostered respectively. His grandmother was emotionally and physically abusive and his uncles were also physically abusive. He had to share a bed with one of his uncles. He also spent sometime living at another house until, as far as he remembers, they got fed up of him and dumped him back at his grandmother's. John felt worthless and was told he was a 'dirty child'. John was sexually abused once by his uncle and numerous times by the older girls living in his street. He considered this sexual attention to be much more pleasurable than the beatings that he suffered at his grandmother's house. He considered these girls to be his friends and it was only when they involved other boys in his abuse and started tying him up that he said he started to dislike it. He claims the turning point was when somebody he could not see masturbated him to climax (his first proper climax) and this somebody turned out to be one of the teenage boys. This disturbed him.</p> <p>He later went on to abuse a number of young girls. The girls he chose had to meet a certain criteria, which were determined by the appearance of the girls that had abused him. He seemed to be</p>

	<p>obsessed with the age 10, which to him meant that the girls were old enough for sexual contact. He considered that all girls were prostitutes and that they were going to grow up to be prostitutes, so he wasn't doing any harm. He saw the world as dangerous and subsequently felt that he should hurt others before they hurt him. His motivation appeared to be that of revenge. He also stated that if he was a paedophile then he was going to do it to the best of his ability.</p>
<b>Darren</b>	<p>Darren's father died in 1944. His mother remarried, but her new husband was very violent, which eventually resulted in his mother leaving him. Darren reported that his mother was very emotionally distant and increasingly more violent and following one particular incident, where she hit him across the face with an iron bar, he sought refuge with a neighbour. This neighbour challenged Darren's mother, who responded by saying 'if you are that worried about the little bastard you keep him'. Darren's childhood experience left him with the feeling that he couldn't be loved. From this point Darren spent 90% of his time living at the neighbour's house. The downside of this arrangement was that this man, whilst caring for him and meeting his material needs, went on to sexually abuse him. Darren felt that he had a choice to make; either he could suffer persistent violence or sexual abuse. He felt significant guilt that, according to his perception, he had prostituted himself for the sake of food and clothes.</p> <p>Darren abused a neighbour's daughter. She apparently had a difficult home life, but Darren claimed he was unaware of this at the time. He found that he was sexually aroused to the victim's innocent behaviour. He felt self-disgust, but later on fantasised about her. Fantasising turned in to a need to masturbate to get relief. He went on to abuse his own daughter, but he didn't give any information about this.</p>
<b>Gary</b>	<p>As a child Gary lived at home with his father, mother and sisters. He stated that it was a very dysfunctional family. He was sexually abused by his mother, which was instigated by his father. In addition to the continuous emotional and physical abuse from his father, he was also sexually abused by his father and his father's friends on one occasion when his sisters, who his father usually sexually abused, were not at home. Gary left the family home on the day of his sixteenth birthday and never returned. He was getting into trouble and fighting and he eventually joined the army.</p> <p>After leaving the army he and his wife divorced. He later met a new partner and settled down with her. This lady was a widow and had a son and two daughters from this previous relationship. Gary sexually abused the two daughters. Gary developed a very exclusive relationship with the youngest girl; this allowed much greater opportunity to offend, and as such this girl experienced significantly more harm. The abuse happened at a time when he had been drinking heavily because he had lost his job and he suspected that his partner was having an affair. He believed that if he was hurting so much everyone else should suffer too. He also stated that 'he could do it, so he did'.</p>



<b>Dan</b>	<p>Dan's father was in the army so they had to move house a lot, which he found unsettling. For most of his childhood he lived with his mother, father, his younger sisters and younger brother, until his mother and father separated and divorced. His father was very violent, predominantly towards Dan and his mother; his father would come home drunk and 'drag' him out of bed and leave him to sleep on the landing. Sometimes his mother would take him into her bed, but she then sexually abused him. Two teachers at school also sexually abused him. As a result Dan was confused about what love was; the only supposed affection that he had received was abusive. Dan was angry with his mother because he felt that he didn't get the attention that he wanted and he was jealous of the attention that his younger siblings received. He was annoyed that his mother was out doing voluntary work rather than at home looking after him. He resented having to be the one that had to go in front of the head teacher to justify to social services that he and his siblings needed new shoes, for example, so that they could get the money for new ones.</p> <p>Dan reported that he sexually abused his sister in order to hurt his mother. He later abused his daughter because he wanted to hurt his wife and his in-laws and also to escape from the marriage. His motivation therefore appears to be that of revenge. He also raped his sister as an adult because he felt she didn't appreciate the help he gave her.</p>
<b>Glen</b>	<p>Glen grew up in what he describes as a dysfunctional family, which was characterised by physical and emotional abuse and neglect. He was targeted for sexual abuse at the age of nine and half by his cousin, who was in his thirties. Glen recalled that this abusive relationship continued until he was nineteen. However, the power differential and abusive aspect of this relationship seemed to continue until Glen went to prison to serve his current sentence.</p> <p>Whilst in prison for an unrelated offence Glen decided to self-disclose that he had sexually abused his nephew. He reported doing this because his non-disclosure was causing him distress; he wanted to get it out in the open and clear his conscience. He abused his eight year old nephew on approximately seven occasions when he was twenty-eight. He claimed that at first the incidents were spontaneous and that only later did he explicitly plan to get him on his own in order to abuse him.</p>
<b>Joe</b>	<p>Joe, unlike the other participants, was not abused as a child; he reported a settled, secure family background. He realised at a young age that he was homosexual. This was during a time when it was not socially accepted to be gay and he therefore lived a secretive life. He was a founding member of a naturist camp and later became the chairman of the club. Through this role he abused three adolescent boys although he only admits to having a 'sexual relationship' with one of the boys.</p>

## **Ethical Considerations**

Given the sensitive nature of this topic, ethical considerations were of paramount importance. The current study followed The British Psychological Society's code of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines (The British Psychological Society 2000). The key issues considered fall in to seven areas: consent, deception, debriefing, withdrawal from investigation, confidentiality, protection of the participants, and protection of the researcher. These are presented in turn with details about how relevant issues were satisfied.

### **Consent**

As with most research, it is essential that participants give their informed consent. Therefore participants were informed of the purpose of the study, about their role as participants and the intended use of the data they provided. A copy of the information sheets and consent forms given to participants can be found in the appendices (for adult survivors see appendix 5; for police officers see appendix 6; for offenders see appendix 7). At the same time the issue of limited confidentiality was highlighted, which applied if unresolved offences were disclosed (see section on confidentiality for more details).

There are a number of consent issues relating to the participants' perceived freedom to consent, which is important to consider. Two of the adult survivors were known to the research independently of this research and it was this pre-existing relationship that presented them with the opportunity to participate. It is possible that an existing relationship between the researcher and participants results in extra pressure on the participants to take part in the study. However, these known participants volunteered during normal conversations and could be considered to have selected themselves for the sample. Furthermore, there are others known to the researcher whom are members of the target population but that did not volunteer. It is my position that to deny these individuals the freedom to participate because of an existing relationship would have been unethical. However, it did raise further issues about maintaining the anonymity of these individuals and their perceived freedom to withdraw from the study, which are discussed in the sections below on confidentiality and withdrawal from investigation respectively.

Far from these aforementioned considerations compromising the integrity and ethical stance of the study, these pre-existing relationships resulted in a positive researcher bias. Sandelowski (1998) recognised that researcher bias can hinder the research process, but it can also facilitate it and I believe that my research bias did the latter. An established level of trust and rapport existed between the researcher and the known interviewees and, in fact, it was this relationship that meant these two interviewees agreed to participate. In turn, it was this relationship that assured my friend's friend that she could trust me and enabled her to participate. My motivation and reasons for conducting the research were important to the adult survivors, because it gave them confidence in me and an awareness of my commitment, integrity, and mutual concerns. This was true for all participants, but an existing relationship facilitated this.

When individuals are known to the researcher, external to the research process, not only can this affect whether they choose to participate, as discussed above, but this can also have an effect on what is disclosed during the interview. Furthermore, in this situation, boundaries are very important because the researcher may know more about the participants than is intentionally disclosed during the interviews; thus it is important to be clear about these boundaries and if necessary to check with the participant that they are happy with the level of disclosure. One survivor's disclosure of an incident, that was previously undisclosed, indicated that they both trusted me with this information and felt free to disclose, which suggests that interviewing known individuals had a positive rather than a detrimental impact on the current study.

One factor that I had not considered or anticipated, in relation to interviewing people that knew each other, was that a participant disclosed information about another participant that this person had not disclosed, either because it did not come up in the interview or through explicit choice. In hindsight it was only an issue once and the information was not of such great sensitivity that it caused problems. However, it does highlight the issue of needing to be aware of what has been told in confidence and indeed who has said what.

Consent issues also existed for the child sex offenders which related to their freedom to consent. The power differential between the researcher and the offenders was

affected by the offenders' incarceration. The fact that I held a position outside the prison, as opposed to being employed by the prison, seemed to put them at ease. Offenders may have felt that they were obliged to participate; the researcher explained that they were free to choose if they wanted to participate and that their decision would not in anyway affect their sentence or treatment either in an advantageous or detrimental way. Further attempts were made to buffer the effects of the power differential by giving the offenders as much freedom as I was permitted to give, which included choosing the date and time of their interview within the constraints of the prison and taking comfort breaks as required, as well as reminding them about their right to withdraw. I also met with the offenders twice before the interviews to allow them time to consider their participation and to build up a level of trust. The fact that one offender withdrew from the study indicates that there was a freedom to give or deny consent (see section on withdrawal from investigation below)

Similarly, the police officers may have felt obliged to consent because their DS had agreed for the department to be involved in the study. However, not all members of the department participated which suggests that they did have a freedom to consent.

### **Deception**

The participants were fully aware of the researcher's intentions and purpose of the study throughout; deception was not used. However deception was a consideration when interviewing child sex offenders. It is not possible to guarantee that the offenders' account represent one hundred percent truth, especially considering the tendency for child sex offenders to justify their actions. However, the offenders had to have admitted guilt to participate on the SOTP and thus were more likely to speak the truth. The offenders were also aware that I had access to their files if required and hopefully this acted as an incentive to give an honest account of their experiences.

### **Debriefing**

As the topic under discussion was emotive and in some cases involved revisiting past traumatic experiences, participants were advised that after the interview they may

feel that they needed further counselling. Participants were encouraged to investigate for themselves services that they would like to use. It was felt that, particularly for the adult survivors, control of this stage should be given over to the participants. In addition, all participants were provided with details of helplines where they could get help and advice (for adult survivors see appendix 8; for police officers see appendix 9; for offenders see appendix 10). In the case of police officers and child sex offenders, counselling services were provided by the police force and prison service respectively.

All of the survivors had received some form of counselling in the past and one of them was currently engaged in counselling and felt that talking about his experiences had helped. Apart from this individual, the adult survivors indicated that they were more likely to use the informal networks they had in place if further debriefing was needed. All survivors reported feeling positive at the end of the interview and were pleased they had taken part.

The child sex offenders had all completed the SOTP and were therefore accustomed to talking about their experiences. They all had access to a counselling service, if required, and 24 hour access to the Samaritans. Two of the three individuals who had continued contact with their family after conviction reported that it was important to be honest and open with their partners and would therefore discuss with them what had happened in the interview. One offender felt unwell at the end of the interview, but he explained that this was mostly due to side effects related to having run out of his medication. Again the offenders felt positive about their interview experience. It was important to consider that the interviewees had lives going on outside of the interview which may impact on the interview indirectly. One of the offenders had had a dispute with his partner on the wing and was therefore in a negative mood when he arrived. He later reported that talking had really helped and he left the interview feeling much more positive.

The police officers had access to counselling but the risk to their well being was limited because they were not talking about personal trauma. The debrief issue for the police officers was related to receiving some feedback about the outcome of the research. A summary of this thesis will be provided for their reference after completion. In the meantime the published articles, presented in Chapter 2 and 3,

were sent to the DS for their information. Future publications will also be forwarded in due course.

In addition to the debriefing of the participants, provision was made for the debriefing of the researcher. As well as having a very supportive supervisory team, one of whom was a clinical psychologist, the researcher had the facility to seek counselling support through the university, privately or through the prison providing access to child sex offenders. The supervisory team and my informal support network provided an appropriate level of support.

### **Withdrawal from investigation**

Participants were informed from the outset that they could withdraw from the study at any time. It was explained that this might be before, during, or after the interview. If either of the latter two options were exercised, all data from that participant would have been returned to them or destroyed. However this situation never arose. It was more likely that interviewees wished to take a comfort break during the interview, either for a cup of tea or a cigarette. Participants were given the freedom to do this.

The withdrawal of one survivor and one offender indicated that appropriate systems were in place for individuals to withdraw. This included the offenders having the facility to withdraw from the study by sending a message via the prison staff which is, in fact, what one offender did; this offender chose to withdraw after speaking to another prisoner who raised his anxiety levels about participating. All interviews began by asking if the interviewees wanted to continue. The interview with this adult survivor required travelling a substantial distance, so their desire to continue with the interview was confirmed before setting out and in this case they withdrew.

### **Confidentiality**

Participants and the organisations that were facilitating this research were assured that their identities would remain confidential unless permission was provided in advance of disclosure. The audio-recordings were secured in a locked cabinet along with paper copies of the transcripts or saved on a personal computer with passwords required for access. The researcher explained to each participant that their interview

transcripts would be identifiable through the use of a pseudonym and hence they would be anonymous. Furthermore, the researcher would keep complete electronic versions of the transcripts which would be password protected. Participants were informed that quotes from the transcripts would be selected to support the analysis and thus would appear in the final thesis and associated publications. It was agreed that the audio-recordings would be destroyed following completion of this research and that the transcripts would be kept for a further two years to allow further study, after which they would also be destroyed. There was a further confidentiality issue raised by the need to protect the researcher and this is dealt with below.

### **Protection of participants**

Comfort of the participants was paramount. It was made clear to participants that they were free to not answer a question if they desired. This issue did not arise. Interviews were flexible and wherever possible followed the lead of the interviewee. The researcher was observant of signs of distress in the interviewee and was prepared to adapt, suspend or curtail the interview if the participant became distressed. As stated above, one offender found things difficult because his medication had run out and so asked not to return for the second session of the interview; however there were no other problems in this regard. Protection of participants also relates to the debriefing arrangements as detailed above.

Considering the prominence of power differentials in abusive relationships it seemed important to consider the power relations within the interviews. Interviews with the adult survivors and police officers did not present many concerns with regard to power relations because it was possible to give power and control over to the interviewees. However it was more difficult with the offenders because they were incarcerated and their power was duly restricted. It was also possible that their incarceration affected their perception of my power. These issues have been considered above in as much as they relate to the participants freedom to consent.

### **Protection of the researcher**

Protection of the researcher involved both physical and psychological safety. Physical safety is a concern because interviews were conducted on a one-to-one

basis and because some interviews took place in the interviewees' homes. In the situation where the researcher knew the interviewee prior to the interview, the researcher was able to ascertain that the risk to her was relatively low. For interviews with individuals not previously known to the researcher, the potential risk was harder to determine because of a lack of knowledge about the interviewees' histories.

The risk associated with interviewing people in their own homes was managed through making a member of the supervisory team aware of the details of the visit. This included information about when, where, and with whom, at what time and how long it was likely to take. When the researcher arrived at the location of the interview, she would send a SMS text message to the supervisor to let them know they had arrived. This also demonstrated to participants that someone else knew of the researcher's whereabouts and acted as a form of protection. Following the interview the researcher contacted the respective supervisor to inform them that all was well. If there was a delay in the researcher making contact then the supervisor would have investigated and involved other agencies where necessary. Thankfully this situation never arose. Obviously this raised issues relating to confidentiality. However, once the safety of the researcher was confirmed, the details of the interview held by the supervisor were then destroyed. In order to maintain participant confidentiality further the supervisor was not aware of which transcript related to which interview session.

The physical risk presented by the child sex offenders was perceived to be greater than the other interviewees; although perhaps was lower than if their sexual offences had been against women. Discussions took place within the prison about issues relating to the researcher's personal safety. It was decided that it would be best to interview offenders that had been through treatment, because they were more likely to be truthful and a lower risk. Arrangements were made for the researcher to have security clearance, which allowed her to carry a set of prison keys and a radio. The radio also had a panic button incorporated which, if an emergency had arisen, would have alerted the prison of the need for assistance. The interview room was set up so that the researcher was nearest the door, whilst maintaining a path for the child sex offender to leave the room without having to confront the researcher. In addition, the door to this room had a glass-viewing panel so that members of staff could



monitor the situation and ensure the researcher's safety. Furthermore, before interviewing the child sex offenders, the researcher attended a one-week induction course which covered issues of safety including personal protection.

It is important to note that one of the adult survivors had a conviction for a sexual offence against a woman; this meant that he presented a higher risk to the researcher. However, he was interviewed under the same circumstances as the child sex offenders, as detailed above, and as such the risk was manageable. The police officers, on the other hand, presented little or no physical risk, because of the position that they held they were deemed to be safe and, furthermore, interviews were conducted at a police station where there were other people around.

Psychological safety is an additional concern as the researcher is inviting people to talk about traumatic and potentially disturbing incidents of sexual grooming. However, it was decided that details about the actual sexual contact were not relevant to this study and hence participants were not asked to disclose this. This risk was mediated through the debriefing of the researcher, as described above.

## **Procedure**

The current study accessed individuals' experience of sexual grooming through individual, one-off, semi-structured qualitative interviews. Kvale (1996) defines a semi-structured interview as 'an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena'. The important focus was exploring the participant's perception of their sexual grooming experience, whether that was first hand in the case of the adult survivors and the child sex offenders, or second hand in the case of the police officers.

A one-to-one interview format was deemed to be the most appropriate context in light of the topic under discussion. It was also considered important in order to maintain participants' privacy and facilitate disclosure of their experience. Furthermore, where possible, interviews were conducted in an environment selected by the interviewees. For most of the adult survivors this was their own home. The child sex offenders were all interviewed in an interview room situated in the

institution where they were resident at the time of the interview. The interview room had a viewing panel in the door and was set up so that the offender could leave the room without having to confront the researcher, who was nearer the door for ease of escape and safety. Police officers were interviewed in an interview room at their station.

Although the order of the interviews was not of particular methodological importance, it was decided for ethical reasons that the adult survivors should be the first group to be interviewed. It was felt that this was important to show these individuals the significance of their contribution. The order of the remaining groups was less of a consideration. Availability of interviewees and the need to wait for security clearance determined that the police officers were interviewed second, followed finally by the child sex offenders.

All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. This maximised the quality of the data, maintained participants' confidentiality and facilitated analysis. Participants were asked if they would like a copy of their interview transcript. The only exception here was the child sex offenders, who for ethical reasons did not receive a copy of their transcript, because this would have a currency amongst sex offenders. Only one interviewee (an adult survivor) requested a copy of their interview. Interviews lasted between one and a total of four hours. Most interviews were approximately one and half-hours in length. The longer interviews took place over two sessions. All participants were informed at the outset of the interview that they were free to stop the interview at any time, either to withdraw from the study or for a comfort break. In addition, they were assured that the information that they disclosed would be anonymised. Furthermore, interviewees were invited to contact the researcher after the interview if necessary, for example if they felt they needed to add something to the interview. More details about ethical considerations are discussed later in this chapter.

There were three levels of validity and reliability checks conducted to facilitate triangulation and to check the quality of the analysis. First of all, the researcher collaborated with two colleagues who were also conducting IPA independently from this study, to discuss the analysis of the first two interview transcripts. This provided a platform for skills development and a confirmation that similar themes

were identified by the researcher and two independent researchers. However, inter-rater reliability may be an inappropriate criterion to measure quality, because it simply states that a number of people agree rather than checking objectivity (Yardley 2000). For this reason it is important to include other quality checks, which in my view are more valuable in this context.

Secondly, the reader needs to be able to judge the internal validity of the analysis; Smith identified two criteria for assessing this – internal coherence and presentation of evidence (Smith 1996). These criteria require the presented analysis to be internally consistent and warranted by the data and furthermore that enough verbatim extracts are presented to allow the reader to establish satisfaction of the first criteria. Therefore, the presentation of the findings includes generous extracts from the transcripts to allow the reader to assess the quality of the analysis (Elliot *et al.* 1999). In addition, the researcher's reflexivity informs the reader of the researcher's standpoint, which is important to facilitate transparency of the analysis and recognition of any potential bias. This reflexivity can be found at the end of this chapter.

Thirdly, participant collaboration provided a final check of the analysis. Riessman (1993, cited in Yardley 2000) supports this method of checking credibility and denies that a researcher's interpretation is devalued. In fact, this method of checking credibility is suggested by Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999) as a means of improving the quality of qualitative research. Thus, at least one participant from each group was invited to read the analysis or look at the themes and provide any feedback they felt appropriate. However, due to practical reasons of access, availability and potential ethical concerns i.e. not wanting to educate offenders further about how to groom victims more successfully, the researcher decided not to collaborate with the offenders. Instead, it was decided that the prison psychologist, who had facilitated access initially, could provide a suitable validity check, because of her expertise and familiarity with the offenders' histories. Confidentiality was not deemed to be a concern because the analysis was anonymised and would be available to the public following examination of this thesis. Unfortunately, due to the health problems experienced by the researcher during the research process, the consultation was delayed and subsequently the prison psychologist no longer worked at the prison and therefore has not, as yet, been contactable.

### **Interview schedules**

The development of the interview schedules followed an in depth review of the literature on sexual grooming; please see Chapters 2 and 3. Questions evolved out of this reading and from the researcher's own experience. The interview schedules were made up of open-ended questions which were presented, where possible, in chronological order in an attempt to facilitate participants' recall of events (Pryor 1996). However the interviews were flexible, so the interview schedule was merely a guide for the interviewer, and not an exact order or recipe. A copy of the interview schedules used for each of the interview groups can be found in the appendices (for survivors see appendix 11; for police officers see appendix 12; for offenders see appendix 13).

Care was taken to present questions in a sensitive manner, which allowed interviewees permission to have a range of reactions and responses. The interview schedule included some 'warm up' questions to help the interviewee settle in and some finishing questions that in the case of the adult survivors drew on their strength as survivors in an attempt to re-empower them as a survivor rather than leaving them as a victim. Additional techniques used throughout the interview included reflection, summarising and paraphrasing to encourage clarity and expansion.

The first question that I asked all the participants related to how they felt about taking part in the research. Some participants were a bit anxious, but all were happy to participate if I believed that their experience would be helpful. Both the survivors and the offenders were then invited to introduce themselves and to tell me about themselves. This dialogue started with details about their family and their lives as children. This storytelling continued, punctuated by questions that sought to understand and find out more about the detail of events and the dynamics of relationships with the people involved. I asked participants about their views, thoughts, feelings and behaviours at the time of the abuse and their retrospective perspective in the present, as well as looking at the short and long term impact. For the offenders this line of conversation continued on to details about their own offences for which I asked for similar detail. The interview schedule did not

specifically ask about sexual grooming, but rather the researcher inferred about sexual grooming from the interviewees discussion of their experiences.

Following the initial opening question, the interviews with police officers proceeded to establish their level of experience and the training that they had received to carry out their current role. The police officers then explained how a disclosure comes to their attention and how an investigation is conducted. They provided many different examples of how offenders targeted their victims and provided details about their observations during their involvement with the victims, victims' families and offenders. Attention was then turned towards the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and their opinions relating to Section 15 'meeting a child following sexual grooming' and the Risk of Sexual Harm Orders.

There were two further questions that the interview schedules all had in common. Firstly, 'did anything surprise you about your experience?' This was a general question with a wide variety of responses. Secondly, the participants were all asked what advice they would give to policy makers, parents, children and others, in order to make children safer.

It was acknowledged that interviewees might think of something at a later date that they wished they had said during the interview. Interviewees were therefore provided with a means of contacting the interviewer if necessary (one participant added something after the interview whilst the interviewer was still present); please see ethical considerations for the procedures in place for this.

### **Analytical Procedure**

The analysis procedure followed that of Smith (1999). The IPA process of analysis began with open coding, where meaningful extracts from the transcripts were assigned a code, which was a word or phrase that captured the meaning. Related codes were subsequently clustered together into themes. In the early stages of analysis it was important to remain close to the data, but when clustering themes the researcher needed to engage with the data and look for subjective meaning. This resulted in the generation of superordinate categories, which had their own subordinate categories. Smith (2004) suggested that there are at least three levels of

analysis: social comparison, metaphor, and temporal referents. An example page of an annotated transcript can be found in appendix 14, which shows the subordinate categories (open coding) on the left and the superordinate categories (names of clustered themes) on the right. This example provides an example of each level of analysis.

This project entailed analysing more than one account of the phenomenon under study, so the process began idiosyncratically through open coding of individual accounts. Subsequently, the adult survivor's analyses were combined during the later stages through the collapsing of superordinate categories; the same was true for the police officer and the child sex offenders. The later stages of analysis are part of a cyclical process (Willig 2001) where the researcher continuously returns to the transcripts to check the emerging themes and interpretation against the data. It is inevitable that the analysis of earlier transcripts influenced the analysis of later transcripts because of the increased salience of some themes due to earlier identification.

Due to the significant overlap of themes it was decided that, instead of presenting the analysis separated by interviewee group, the research findings would be more informative and beneficial if they were presented thematically. Thus, the analysis was organised and presented in this way. However, a copy of the preliminary analysis at the group-specific stage can be found on a CD attached to the back cover of this thesis which is appendix 1. In fact, the combination of the different interviewee groups formed another stage of the analysis, which enabled consideration of the similarities and differences between participants and groups of participants. Consequently, two models were formed out of these analyses which illustrate the sample's experiences of sexual grooming.

### **Reflexivity**

Given the subjective nature of IPA it is good practice to clarify the position from which the subjective interpretations reported in the current study are made. Reflexivity is an important part of making the researcher's position known and increases the analysis transparency and thus provides another reliability check. I therefore take this opportunity to introduce myself, the researcher, in an attempt to

increase the validity of the research findings by making my position within the data as clear as I can.

The research findings will be based on my interpretations, in conjunction with discussions with my supervisory team, and for this reason it is possible that others would interpret or report the findings differently. However, by making the process as transparent as possible and providing evidence from the transcripts I hope to provide clear justification for my interpretations. This does not mean that other interpretations would necessarily be wrong. Furthermore, the large amount of data in this study could have been presented in a number of different ways and my interpretation of the data has undoubtedly affected the chosen format. It is important to understand my position so that the reader can make independent judgements about the validity and credibility of the research findings.

My motivation to conduct this research is partly because a number of my family members and other friends have suffered child sexual abuse and partly because my intention is work in child protection in a professional capacity. One factor I had to consider, as part of the planning of this research, was what effect this research may have on me and in fact one of the survivors actually asked me how I felt about doing this research. I realised that, because I knew several of the adult survivors I was interviewing, my persistent memory was of them now as survivors and about how they were surviving despite the difficulties that they had faced. This somehow mediated the effect of hearing their very sad and distressing stories.

When interviewing the offenders I was not sure how I would feel. Five out of the six interviewees had themselves been abused as children. Having this understanding helped me to humanise the participants, but in turn this situation presented the conundrum of why they inflicted the same suffering on to other children when they themselves had been victims. All offenders had been through the sex offender treatment programme and were willing to take part, so that demonstrated their willingness to help and for some of the offenders they felt as if they owed it to their victim(s) to give something back. Part of the reason that I was able to interview the offenders and listen to their accounts was because I hold the belief that people can change. My Christian beliefs mean that I believe that no one is beyond redemption. I did not consider that I was not there to judge but to learn from them as much as I

could. In order to achieve this, I had to be able to treat them with common decency despite how I felt about what they had done.

At the end of the interview with one of the male survivors, who had been abused by a Catholic Priest, I felt the need to disclose that I was a Christian, because I felt that it would have been dishonest not to tell him and that it was important to give him the option to withdraw if he wished. I wanted to be open and honest, but also to emphasize the difference between my Christian faith and Catholicism. This was in some ways defensive, but I felt that it was important for him to understand that I did not subscribe to the same belief system that had made him so vulnerable. This was well received and he went on to talk about positive experiences he had of one of his Christian lecturers.

Other factors that are important to consider in relation to reflexivity are the fact that I am white female, and at the time of the interviews I was 25 year old, from a working class background, but aware that with an undergraduate degree and studying for a PhD I may be considered by some to be middle class. These factors can be very important in considering the power relations between me and the interviewees.

The fact that I was female appeared to be important when interviewing the adult survivors because they had all been abused by men and thus they were more comfortable talking about their experiences with a woman. One survivor even said she hated men, so one can assume that she would not have agreed to participate if the interviewer had been male. My gender was not an issue when talking to the offenders primarily because they had completed the SOTP, which had been run by the prison psychologists all of whom were female. They were therefore accustomed to talking about their experiences with young females.

My age is unlikely to have had a negative effect on the power relations in the interview process because I was the same age as one interviewee and younger than the rest. However, as the researcher I may have been deemed to be an expert, which may have resulted in a greater power imbalance. I explained to the interviewees that, on the contrary, in this scenario, they were considered to be the experts. An additional factor that I used to reduce the power differential in the interviews was mutual self disclosure; they were sharing so much of their experiences it seemed



right that I shared something of myself, if it was appropriate. However, I was careful not to disclose any information to the offenders that would have compromised my personal safety.

Throughout the period of my research I experienced serious health problems. Ultimately I had to suspend my research programme and undergo numerous operations and medical procedures. This experience gave me an insight into some of the things that the survivors were telling me. I had firsthand experience of a feeling of powerlessness and of having something wrong with me that was not visible. I think that people who have suffered often respond better to people that have suffered too, and although my suffering was different to theirs it seemed to reduce the power differential.

## Chapter 5 - Vulnerability

This and the following four chapters present the analysed interview data from this study, which considered different perspectives of sexual grooming. The interview groups included adult survivors of child sexual abuse, police officers and child sex offenders; each of which will be identified throughout this thesis by the following acronyms in the brackets after each quote – S, PO and O respectively. Furthermore, the names of people and places which may act as identifying markers have been changed to preserve the confidentiality of all concerned. Due to a significant overlap in themes these results are presented thematically rather than as data from individual groups. Four superordinate themes were identified, which were *vulnerability; offenders' self-grooming; entrapment and grooming shadow*. These are presented broadly in the order in which they occur in relation to an offence. Each theme will be presented in a table at the beginning of the relevant chapter. Two models of how these themes fit together are presented in the discussion chapter (see pages 211-215). However how each theme contributes The Sexual Grooming Process will be sketched out at the end of each chapter.

This section presents the findings relating to the superordinate theme vulnerability, which is outlined in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 - Superordinate theme vulnerability**

<b>Vulnerability</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Personal level</b>	Role of caregiver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers as gatekeepers</li> <li>• Deviant norms</li> <li>• Failure to protect</li> <li>• Unmet needs</li> </ul>
			Role of offenders' self-grooming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offenders' motivation</li> <li>• Offenders' self focus</li> </ul>
		<b>Cultural level</b>	Inherited power and status of offenders Increased freedom Materialism Role of new technologies
		<b>Structural level</b>	Role of the authorities & the legal system
	<b>Awareness</b>	Vigilance and awareness due to risk of harm	
		Intergenerational transmission of risk	

Vulnerability included two subordinate themes, which were *responsibility* and *awareness*. The first of these subordinate themes considers the construction of children's vulnerability and who is responsible for children's vulnerability. The second subordinate theme relates to survivors and offenders' awareness of children's vulnerability and how this awareness is used directly or indirectly to either increase vulnerability or increase protection.

## 5.1 Responsibility

A child's natural vulnerability is inevitable because of their age, innocence and trusting nature. Until a child is mature they are reliant on their parents or caregivers. These relationships should provide the necessary protection for infants to grow, mature and develop into young adults when they can learn to look after themselves; unfortunately, this care is not guaranteed and it is not without fault. Based on the experiences that the interviewees shared with me, it was evident that it was not the child's natural vulnerability that put them at the greatest risk of being abused but rather they were susceptible to increased vulnerability as a result of factors in the environment in which they lived and the actions and inaction of the people in that environment. It will also be shown that seemingly 'normal' beliefs and rules facilitated offenders' access to victims as well as the more obvious dysfunctional/deviant behaviour. This theme explores the factors that increase a child's vulnerability, which were present at a *personal*, *cultural* and *structural level* of influence.

### 5.1.1 Personal level

At a personal level, vulnerability was increased by the *role of caregivers* and also through the *role of offenders' self-grooming*.

#### a) Role of caregivers

Discussion about a victim's vulnerability being increased by caregivers was a theme common across the different interview groups. However, whilst the offenders referred to the role of caregivers in practical terms i.e. *caregiver as gatekeepers* and an obstacle to be overcome, the adult survivors' discussion was much more to do with their caregivers' responsibility for their vulnerability through their *failure to protect*; although two of the offenders, Joe (O) and John (O), who had committed

extra-familial offences, were also very explicit about their victims' caregivers' *failure to protect*. However, the victim-offenders did not focus on their parents and caregivers' *failure to protect* them. It is possible that *Caregivers as gate keepers* and *failure to protect* maybe two sides of the same coin by reflecting different perspectives on the same concept. Both the survivors and victims reported that *deviant norms* and *unmet needs* increased vulnerability. The police officers' accounts provided general support for these themes based on their experiences. These are all factors that offenders were able to take advantage of to gain access to their victims and subsequently entrap them in cycle of abuse (the theme entrapment will be considered later in this chapter). These four factors - *caregivers as gatekeepers*, *deviant norms*, *failure to protect* and *unmet needs* - will be discussed below.

- ***Caregivers as gatekeepers***

An offender must first gain access to a victim before they start gaining the child's compliance; the offender must, therefore, tackle any obstacles present in the child's environment, which includes the significant adults in the child's life. 'It is the access to the child that can take a long while to happen but I am sure, as a paedophile, if you plan you will get there' (Dave - PO). John, one of the offenders, stated the importance of parents' gatekeeper role in gaining access.

If I don't know them I can't talk to 'em. I used to try and ingratiate me self with the family or with the parents... that is me getting in. (John - O)

The police officers reported that offenders that targeted working class families tended to befriend the family, whilst offenders that targeted more privileged families seemed to use other strategies.

They [offender] do seem to go for people that are on benefits and working class, certainly that type of abuse you know whereby they befriend the family; whereas, you don't get so many upper class who have met in that way. (Jane - PO)

The example that Jane (PO) gave was of an offender who provided piano lessons. Families on a lower income are unlikely to be able to afford such lessons. However, it is possible that an offender could use this strategy of gaining access to a child who could not afford lessons because they may then offer them free or significantly

cheaper in order to gain access. The police officers reported that offenders often targeted caregivers' vulnerabilities and lack of awareness.

What makes them successful - by putting themselves at the right place, at the right time, basically? I mean if I was a paedophile I would make sure that I moved in circles of people that weren't very highly educated, because they are easier to talk to, talk down to if you like. Single mothers are the best; or the people on the local council estate, and this isn't me being snobby, but a lot of them are single parents, with young kids several of them, several different fathers, that is the social pattern of it shall we say. (Dave - PO)

Either way, this demonstrates the importance of the caregivers' role in gaining access to a potential victim.

In addition, the police officers reported that they very rarely dealt with victims whose families were intact, where they were living with both of their birth parents; they also highlighted that they dealt with a significant number of cases where the abuser was a stepparent or the parent's partner. It might seem that the traditional family structure offers a child the best protection, because with two parents to meet a child's needs and to occupy and monitor them, there is less opportunity for an offender to gain access. In fact, the traditional family structure did not offer protection to one survivor, who was abused by a priest. Furthermore, the possible protection from an intact family is dependent on the biological parents not being abusive themselves.

It is important to note that the presence of a stepfather *per se* does not automatically have negative consequences; often the relationship between a stepfather and stepchild is positive and fulfilling for both adult and child. However, the assumption here is that the absence of a parent results in an elevated vulnerability, which shows the importance of parent's gatekeeper role. It also leaves single parents vulnerable to the tactics of an offender who may choose to befriend a family in order to gain access and insider status. This will be discussed further under the theme inherited power and status, which is presented under the cultural level influence below. It is important to note that some families may be more likely to come in to contact with the police and so the police officers' views may be skewed by this.

- *Failure to protect*

A failure to protect, manifested as ignorance, and was present in two different forms in the interviewees' accounts; first, some people were ignorant through lack of awareness and the presence of deviant norms, which inadvertently endorsed the offenders' abusive behaviour. Secondly some people appeared to be deliberately ignorant by 'turning a blind eye' (Joe - O). Jane (PO) explicitly stated that 'an omission [ignorance] is just as bad as an offence'. Deviant norms will be considered in the next section.

Joe – one of the offenders - suggested that parents generally accepted an implicit theory that child sexual abuse (CSA) would never happen to their family or by their family and friends. This may be one reason why parents fail to protect.

They [parents] become so used to you [the offender] being there that they get sort of blasé about the whole thing, you know well you are a friend of the family (pause) you must be all right... they have got to be aware that it can happen. It's a bit like erm (pause) it's a bit like car accidents, it could happen to everybody else, but it can never happen to me. (Joe – O)

Eve - one of the police officers - made a similar observation of parents believing that 'that would never happen to me'. Unfortunately, this leaves parents ill prepared to recognise a potentially abusive situation when it does happen. Joe (O) went further and suggested that people also tend to believe that 'if we just pretend it is not happening, it will maybe go away'.

Ignorance and lack of awareness, as mentioned above, is very problematic because parents and caregivers provide a child's primary line of defence; however, there is a paradox in the role of parents and caregivers - whilst parents and caregivers can provide the greatest protection to their children they can also present the greatest risk - because most victims of abuse are abused by a relative or someone they know. All of the survivors and victim-offenders, who were interviewed for this research, had experienced CSA and were sexually abused by someone previously known to them or related to them. The abusers were step-parents, parents, parent's partner, neighbour, uncle, older children, older cousin, family friend, teacher, or priest. Furthermore, in this sample, even where the caregivers were not the actual abusers, they inadvertently provided offenders with access to their children and more importantly legitimised the offending adults and thus their abusive behaviour. This

will be discussed further under inherited power and status as part of the cultural level influence below.

Where an abuser is a relative or someone known to the child then this pre-existing, naturally occurring relationship facilitates access to the potential victim. If parents and caregivers endorse these relationships, which they often do because they are deemed to be 'safe', then parents and caregivers may also be inadvertently legitimising the abusive behaviour in the eyes of the victim and thus increasing the child's vulnerability. Rose (PO) explained a child's logical thought process.

The children think it must be alright then because mum and dad think that it is acceptable, or mum and dad are quite happy for him or her to look after us, so it must be alright (Rose - PO)

The survivors were very adamant that their parents had been ignorant and thus had failed to protect them. Jack - one of the survivors – gave an explicit example of his parents' ignorance when he returned home after being sexually abused.

Ok we'll go back to the garden gate again. I was really messy and I had messed myself and I was in tears and he just explained it a way somehow, (pause) and I was bleeding (pause) and in pain (pause) and I can remember thinking how can you [parents] not know, or if you know then you must be allowing this. (Jack -S)

Given the level of evidence that something untoward had happened and his parent's lack of reaction, Jack believed that his parents were somehow in connivance with his abuser, which represents an example of deliberate ignorance.

Less explicit 'ignorance' included significant adults ignoring signs that appeared to indicate an obvious distress in their children. Ignored signs included not wanting to go home and bedwetting, which instead was the source of humiliation and degradation by Susan (S) and Caroline's (S) mothers rather than as a sign that they were being abused.

Furthermore, some of the non-sexually abusive parents created opportunities for the offender to sexually abuse their child. For example, the Susan (S) and Caroline's (S) mothers produced more opportunities for the offender to abuse them through the isolation that they created. This isolation can be divided in to emotional isolation through physical and emotional abuse and neglect and being separate from the

family, there was a real sense of not belonging, and physical isolation like being left alone in the bedroom for long periods of time or the offender having to sleep in Susan's (S) bedroom when he came home drunk.

My mother was always in the kitchen always cooking, always making drinks for people; doing something in the kitchen. That was where she lived in the kitchen. My mother always used to send me to the bedroom there you go, she'd clear off the dressing table, there you go have your farm, get lost, keep away from us, and of course I was cut off up there, he'd come in (laugh) he'd have easy access then, he'd be in the bloody bedroom then. (Caroline - S)

When he [stepfather] used to come in drunk, she used to take my sister out of her [sister's] bed in to her [mum's] bed and, he used to have to come in to my room drunk. (Susan - S)

This significantly increased the children's vulnerability because these occasions were advantageous for the offenders to gain access.

Unlike the survivors, the victim-offenders did not emphasise the responsibility of their parents or caregivers for their increased vulnerability as children. They still mentioned deviant norms and unmet needs that increased their vulnerability as children (these are discussed in the next two sections) and a failure to protect, but there was much less focus on whose responsibility it was. This may be related to their construction of vulnerability and their tendency to internally attribute the cause of their abuse (see superordinate theme grooming shadow for further discussion).

In relation to their own offences, only two of the offenders explicitly mentioned a caregivers' failure to protect. John (O) stated that it was his mate that made his victim vulnerable because he was supposed to be looking after this little girl and her brothers, whilst their mother was at work, but he was persistently too drunk to be responsible and he would often fall asleep and leave John alone with the little girl, whilst the boys were playing outside. John (O) recalled that, on one occasion, he intended to get his friend drunk so that he could abuse this little girl, but he did not need to because his friend was already very drunk when he arrived and thus John (O) was able to take advantage of the circumstances.



Joe – the second offender who mentioned a failure to protect - found that his victim's parents, who were members of the same nudist club, were deliberately ignorant of the fact that their sons were being sexually abused. It was to them that Joe was referring when he said that people were 'turning a blind eye'.

They (adult male and boy) were in this bedroom clothed but rolling on the bed, which I thought was maybe a bit inappropriate... I made my excuses and left and I actually said to his mother (pause)... that this is going on... And she said oh that's all right they are just very good friends and I thought oh a bit strange sort of attitude. (Joe - O)

These same parents asked Joe if he would take their fourteen year old son on holiday with him. In fact the parents allowed one of their sons to continue seeing a man, even after he had been asked to leave the club due to concerns about the inappropriateness of the relationship between their son and this man. Furthermore, they allowed their other son to stay overnight in Joe's (O) caravan each time they were staying at the club. Both John (O) and Joe (O) committed extra-familial offences, whilst the other offenders' victims were relatives or step-relatives, which could explain this apparent difference between the offenders because in intra-familial offences it is the abuser who has failed to protect.

One of the survivors and two of the victim-offenders reported a failure to protect after they attempted to disclose. Gary and Glen – the two victim-offenders - made disclosures to their grandparents about the physical abuse they experienced at home, but their cries for help were met with rebuke and were silenced.

In those days people didn't talk about things outside their home... and I tried to speak to my grandmother... she basically told me to shut up, these things happened and what happened behind closed doors was nobody else's business. (Gary - O)

Disclosure of physical abuse seemed to be made instead of disclosing the sexual abuse; may be this was a test of a caregivers' response, which equated to a failure to protect. By ignoring the disclosures of physical abuse these grandparents are indirectly responsible for increasing the children's vulnerability. However, these offenders did not hold their grandparents responsible for their vulnerability or continued abuse.

Rachel (S) was abused by her stepfather and her disclosure was met with rebuke but also her mother's justification that it was normal and acceptable.

And like I said every time I did try and say something, like my mum would say it's your, it's not your fault but it's only right it should have happened to you it happened to me, you know I was always confused anyway, even when I thought it was wrong and said something it was always back on me actually. (Rachel - S)

Rachel (S) held her mother partly responsible for her vulnerability and considered that she failed to protect her even when she was aware of the abuse. This sub-theme has highlighted examples of ignorance, which were both deliberate and inadvertent through a lack of awareness; however, the result for the child is the same – a failure to protect.

The police officers' accounts supported this theme, but their views were more strongly related to the intergenerational transmission of risk. This factor is discussed under the superordinate theme awareness below.

- ***Deviant norms***

One factor that was reported consistently across the sample of survivors and the victim-offenders was the extent of violence and neglect suffered by the victims in addition to CSA. In fact, all but one of the survivors and all of the victim-offenders reported a family norm characterised by physical abuse and fear of harm with only one of the offenders reporting a non-abusive childhood. Caroline, one of the survivors, expressed her views about family life very explicitly.

All that went on in my mother's home is fighting and fucking, I was fought and fucked, that's what I can remember. (Caroline - S)

Susan (S) drew a comparison between the care system of the 1960s and her home environment to illustrate how awful it was living at home. Susan (S) left the care system at the age of ten, within which she had suffered physical abuse. Despite these negative experiences care was perceived to be safer than her home environment.

I went home to that environment; I wished to God that I was back in care, because being in care was a hell of a lot safer, even in them days. (Susan - S)

Others also reported very harsh punishments for their misbehaviour; for example, Dan (victim-offender) was sent to the guard room (military holding cell) for two days at the age of six for stealing a toy car from someone at school; John (victim-offender) was routinely scrubbed with a yard broom by his grandmother for getting muddy whilst out playing.

Interestingly the main perpetrators of violence were not necessarily the sexual abuser. In two cases (Rachel – S, & Gary – O) the sexual abuser was also the main perpetrator of violence; however, the other victims of sexual abuse experienced physical abuse from a non-sexually abusive parent or carer. At the time of the abuse, this violent and abusive environment was understood by the victims to be normal.

To be honest I didn't know that my life was different to anybody else's...I actually never thought that it was wrong, and I had never ever said anything a) because you were taught not to sort of say anything, but I just believed that that happened in every home. (Rachel - S)

When deviant norms, such as the violence and neglect discussed above, are already established by a non-sexually abusive parent/carers or the sexual abuser themselves, offenders can utilise this in order to push the limits further to allow sexually inappropriate behaviour. The police officers testified to the fact that victims often report that they did not know that their abusive experiences were wrong.

Obviously we have a lot of cases where it is parent and child, and I would say in that role parents or an adult can groom a child in to thinking it (sexual abuse) is normal behaviour and they grow up with it, I suppose. That's why a lot of cases we deal with have been going on for a good few years or we only hear about it when they are older, when they realise that that wasn't right. (Eve - PO)

This demonstrates the power of sexual grooming, which results in prolonged abuse and delayed disclosure. Further discussion regarding victims' awareness will be considered under the superordinate theme entrapment below.

Another common factor in the victims' relationships with their parents was that their mothers tended to be emotionally distant and half the interviewees also reported that their non-sexually abusive parent (usually their mother) showed favouritism towards their other siblings, who in the interviewees' opinion experienced less physical abuse

and in Caroline (S) and Susan's (S) experience were shown love by their mothers, whilst they found their mothers emotionally distant or absent. In fact, Susan said that her stepfather - the sexual abuser - was nicer than her mother.

She [mother] was very aggressive and violent, not toward my younger sister, towards me. My step-dad on the other hand was the nicer of the two, which is really strange isn't it, urm but I think, I know I think you have to differentiate between you've got one parent who was evil and I mean to the extent evil. (Susan - S)

It is possible that the non-offending parent sensed the 'closeness' between the child and the other parent, which increased distance between this parent and the child, and thus provided more opportunities for abuse to occur. However, perhaps offenders sense the lack of 'closeness' and so abuses this in order to establish a 'special relationship', which in turn may upset the non-offending parent and resultantly create more 'closeness' and distance respectively.

- *Unmet needs*

The presence of deviant norms left many needs unmet. Susan's (S) quote below illustrates how the family environment bred a feeling of not belonging, worthlessness and a desire to be loved.

I have told you things that she [mother] done, the physical things, but not only that the mental things she [mother] done. An example of that would be if we went into town there used to be a café, she [mother] used to make me wait outside for the bus, and took my younger sister in for a drink, so I could call her [mother] when the bus came, that's the sort of thing that she would do, I wasn't worth anything. (Susan - S)

In addition to abuse being accepted as the norm, because victims did not know any different, the attention from the offender was also viewed more favourably against this backdrop of abuse, because it is much easier to groom a child who already has a low self-worth and is used to being treated badly.

A child's or even a family's unmet needs provide a further opportunity for offenders to target them by seemingly meeting these needs. This backdrop, which provides the context in which a child is groomed, plays a very important role in allowing the offenders grooming tactics to be successful. Children need love and attention. As

Eve (PO) said ‘everyone needs someone’. If their needs are not met by a reliable source then they are vulnerable to the so-called love and attention from potential offenders and thus abuse. The basic needs of the victims in this sample were not being met.

Susan (S) and Caroline (S) felt isolated from the family, because they were treated differently and Caroline (S) spent long periods of time shut away in the bedroom; she also said that ‘it was nice to get a cuddle for a change’. Paul (S) said that he ‘grew up craving love and attention’ and that was what made him an ‘easy target’.

I have always wanted this father figure that was strong and bold, but also loving and caring, you know put his arm round me and say ‘I love you son’... but I never got it. (Paul – S)

Paul’s (S) abuser gave him a cuddle ‘the sort of cuddle I would want from me dad – a reassuring cuddle’. Therefore, their unmet needs elevate vulnerability.

The victim-offenders echoed these feelings. Glen (O) also felt as if he was treated differently from his siblings. He acknowledged that his siblings suffered too, but he made it very clear that he felt he had suffered the most; this is shown in his interchange between referring to himself and his siblings as being the target of his mother’s abuse and referring to himself only.

My parents dealt with things in more of a violent way. Like for instance, if me mum didn’t want us around (pause) mostly me, but it did happen to the others as well and all four of us, she put us in a room no bigger than this and stuck something by the door so I couldn’t get out for any reason, you know we kicked the door, rammed the door, asked to go to the toilet and anything, so we messed on the floor. Of course when this gets found we get battered. (Pause) That was what life was like for me. (Glen – O)

Glen (O) experienced this as rejection and thus represented an unmet need to be loved and he was vulnerable to his cousin’s abuse against this backdrop.

Dan (O) also experienced a deep sense of rejection from his parents. He had very low self-esteem; his body image was also very poor because he suffered regular bullying from his mother and the children at school about his size. He was confused about what love was, and because his emotional needs were not met at home he came to understand the abusive behaviour from his teacher as a legitimate display of

love. Furthermore, Dan (O) sought his mother's love and attention and felt rejected because he did not get the desired response from his mother. Subsequently, he was jealous when his brother was born and used to wake him up on purpose so that his mother would have to get up and settle him again. Furthermore, his mother did some voluntary work outside of the home and Dan (O) felt rejected because he believed that she should have been at home looking after him. He was therefore vulnerable to his mother's sexual abuse because he was getting so-called love and attention from her that he had been seeking.

Darren's (O) mother's violence and explicit lack of feelings had a profound effect on Darren (O).

[Because] by almost every word and deed your mother demonstrates that she doesn't love you... I grew up thinking, again not in such clear terms, but inside of me, I just believed that there was that about me that meant that I couldn't be loved. (Darren - O)

This resulted in feelings of rejection and worthlessness. This was also Gary's experience. Gary's (O) father treated him very badly and beat him down and as he says treated him like a 'slave'.

Rejection also increased John's (O) vulnerability. Everyone seemed to reject John (O) and he was periodically moved around from house to house according to people's moods.

They just took me back and left me on the corner with a suitcase and a note around me neck saying 'undesirable'.... so I got back and got a slap you know a scolding off of me grandma. 'You are a waste of space', you are this you're that, 'you're a nuisance' and all that. I haven't done nothing, which I hadn't (laugh) they just got fed up of me. (John - O)

He was very much aware that he was seen as a nuisance. His abusers offered him a more pleasurable alternative to the beatings and negativity that he experienced at home. He felt that the girls that abused him were his friends.

Joe's (O) victim was vulnerable to abuse because he seemed to be 'the odd one out' at home; he asked Joe (O) to help him with his homework because his parents did not help him, which started the habit of them spending time together and provided Joe (O) access through meeting this boy's unmet needs.

One of Gary's (O) victims was vulnerable because she had lost her father at an early age and according to Gary (O) her mother was not very maternal and she treated her children more like siblings than her own children. This little girl, Becky, appeared to have low self-esteem and it seemed that she was lacking the care and attention that she craved. Gary (O) was able to fill that gap.

I really was genuinely fond of Becky, not in any sexual way or anything but just, just simply as a child she was a very er vulnerable, gentle child, she felt that nobody wanted to help her, nobody was interested and I took an interest in her, I helped her with her homework erm I helped her with all sorts of things, you know, I got her to go to Brownies. (Gary - O)

I think from very early on from almost the day that I met Becky [youngest child] she recognised in me someone who was at least sympathetic towards her, someone that she could rely on, someone who was strong and all the things that she had missed from her own father, she transferred to me. (Gary - O)

Offenders used unmet needs as a means of gaining access to a child because this gave them a way of 'worming' (Rose – PO) their way into the child's confidence. The police officers recognised offenders' use of unmet needs to increase their victims' vulnerability, but they spoke more about offenders taking advantage of children's desires for material things, which is discussed under the cultural level below.

#### **b) Role of offenders' motivation**

The presence of vulnerability does not automatically mean that a child will be sexually abused because the presence and motivation of an offender was the factor that ultimately determined the vulnerability of a child. An offender's motivation is an important factor in determining a child's vulnerability because their motivation impacts directly on whom they target and why. In the current sample of offenders, their motivations included sexual attraction, revenge, and proximity. These criteria set by offenders are all external to the child, because as Darren says the children are 'perfectly innocent'.

I had seen the little girl and she was behaving in a perfectly innocent manner as children do, but I found that I was aroused sexually by looking at her.  
(Darren - O)

So for Darren (O) his sexual attraction to this child's innocent behaviour elevated her vulnerability.

Dan's (O) feelings of rejection by his mother and resentment of the attention that his sister received from his mother were very important in his offence chain, because part of his motivation for abusing his sister was to get back at his mother. His sister was therefore vulnerable because of her relationship with her mother and this was used for revenge by proxy.

At the time of the abuse, there was also the fact that my mother was never there... my mother was always out and that may be another reason I did not like her. Why should she be out when I was going home; why, why weren't she there; she was always there when I was a child, why was she never there now? Especially if she was claiming dole money, sorry, she was erm she was on DSS money and I had to go in front of the headmaster to get a pair of shoes... but why's she doing voluntary work for other people and she had us to look after, me to look after. (Dan - O)

Revenge by proxy was also Dan's (O) motive for abusing his daughter because he wanted to get back at his wife and her parents. This same motivation led John (O) to abuse a little girl to get back at his 'mate' and the little girl's mother.

So I am getting my gratification from destroying her [victim], destroying her mother and sorting him [his mate] out at the same time. So am justifying it along. It's revenge in't it. (John - O)

Offenders pre-set criteria also increased a child's vulnerability if they happen to meet this criterion. John (O), for example, had a 'tick list' of physical characteristics, which determined who was a potential target. This again was a consequence of revenge by proxy because John established these criteria based on the teenage girls that had abused him as a child.

Motivation was universally affected by a child's proximity. As mentioned previously John (O) was more attracted to a child the more they trusted him and trust



is directly related to proximity. Therefore, the children that are in the closest proximity to an offender are most at risk; hence, such a high incidence of intra-familial abuse or abuse by a known adult.

Proximity was a problem for Gary (O) when, as a child, in addition to the sexual abuse he experienced from his mother, he was subject to rape by his father and two further males, who were friends of his father, and it was Gary's (O) proximity to his father that made him very vulnerable to this further abuse. In fact, in this instance, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, because he was not the intended victim.

They [father and two friends] have come home and they were going to sexually abuse my sister... she had gone off to my Grandmother's and I was at home by myself er and they were sufficiently drunk and sufficiently, shall we say, aroused that they ended up raping me. (Gary - O)

Again who a victim is related to is a significant factor in their level of vulnerability because of the role of proximity to the offender and also proximity to a person an offender wants to avenge. This proximity may be geographical, relational or physical - in terms of physical likeness – and can be a combination of factors and circumstances.

### **5.1.2 Cultural level**

There are factors at a cultural level that increase children's vulnerability; this level relates to societal norms. These factors include *inherited power and status of offenders, increased freedom, materialism* and the *role of new technologies*. The most dominant of these themes was *inherited power and status of offenders*, which was identified by all three interview groups as a factor that increased children's vulnerability. The latter three themes were much more prevalent in the police officers accounts.

#### **a) Inherited power and status of offenders**

Being related to a child is a pre-existing, naturally occurring relationship that puts the adult in a position of power and authority over the child/victim. The important factor is that the power and status from which parents and relatives benefit is inherited or given by cultural norms and values; it is not something that is earned. A stepparent or a parent's partner inherit similar power and control as a child's birth parents; other relatives and family friends similarly tend to hold a privileged

position. All the offenders in this study discussed having inherited power and status by virtue of their relationship with someone significant to the victim, or with the victim themselves, or because of their position in society relative to the child.

Offenders seek out this insider status, which affords them so much access and authority. One police officer remarked that 'they [child sex offenders] are so clever, I mean they will wait' (Jane - PO). Insider status is very important, it may be naturally occurring like the situation where the abuser is a relative or family friend, alternatively the offender may orchestrate a situation where they gain insider status to facilitate access for the specific purpose of abusing a child, and for example where an offender deliberately befriends a family as described in the extract below.

Well he would be up on his allotment and a new family or a new fella comes up on to the allotment... he will go over there and he will introduce himself and he'll get involved with them... and then the next weekend the same fella may come back and he might have his son with him... before you know where you're at he'll end up being invited down to the house and one thing and another and he'd become very pally there and then with the boy or boys depending on how many there are in the house. But he will go for the one that he thinks he can get away with. (Glen - O)

Jack (S) points to the inheritance of power and authority when he draws a parallel between home and church.

I had been serving on the alter since 5, so urm the church was just like another home. (Jack - S)

Whilst this parallel may refer to familiarity and the amount of time spent at church, it also highlights the privileged access and respect afforded to people in positions of power and responsibility within the church. Jack (S) described the status of the priest as 'God's gift on earth', 'like gods on earth', and he was perceived by others to be able to 'walk on water'. This demonstrates how powerful the priest was in Jack's (S) view and subsequently the authority that Jack (S) believed him to have, because the metaphor of walking on water seems to imply that he had ultimate authority and thus could do anything he wanted. Jack (S) later said this himself:

I think this is all part of this Catholic business, you know, I am just an alter boy and he is a priest and he is allowed to do what he wants. (Jack - S)

Jack (S) was very aware of his abuser's authority. This authority seemed to stretch to a sense of ownership, which is highlighted in Jack's belief that as far as his abuser was concerned he thought 'you're [Jack] my alter boy' (Jack - S). Jack's (S) abuser used pre-existing beliefs to facilitate the process of victimisation. Jack's (S) family was seemingly 'normal' or non-abusive. They held strong Catholic beliefs and Jack states that his entire life was 'bound up' in the church and a desire to be 'good Catholic people'. The family's norms increased Jack's vulnerability because as committed Catholics they were completely trusting of, and submissive to, the authority of the church. The quote below particularly highlights Jack's (S) perception of his vulnerability as a result of being part of a Catholic family.

He [the priest] really understood his situation... (pause) to give your son up for the Church was every Catholic mother's dream, almost. (Jack - S)

This awareness of offenders' power was also evident in accounts where the abuser was a family member or close family friend/step-parent. Rachel (S) demonstrated her view of this when she talked not only about the physical control and violence but also the giving and withholding of food; this highlights her perception of her abuser's control over her life and death, she might have exaggerated when she says that '[she] never got any food', but it serves to highlight the constant struggle, uncertainty and fear that surrounded her childhood. Gary (O) talked about the power of his abusers, who were his father and his father's friends, by emphasising the size of his father particularly in relation to himself and his mother.

My mother was a very weak character erm; she was a tiny, small, little, who was totally dominated by my father. Now I honestly believe, now, that my mother (pause) did what she did just to please my father because otherwise she would get beaten... Er he was a very large man, physically; he was 6 foot 6 er, very powerfully built and because I was always very small, slim and slender he constantly derided me about it... He was also, as I say, very quick tempered and he treated me basically as his servant - his slave. (Gary - O)

Gary (O) made repeated reference to relative size and power compared to his father, which demonstrated how important it is to him. The above extract also shows that the offender's power and control was not only imposed on his children but also on

his wife, which reinforced the offender's power and control in the victim's eyes and thus reduced the likelihood of disclosure and increased the likelihood of compliance.

Extra-familial offenders also used their positions of trust and authority; in fact Joe (O) created a situation where he benefited from similar privileges as intra-familial offenders in his influential role as the chairman of a nudist club. Joe (O) explained that he was seen as 'whiter than white' and enjoyed a great amount of authority as a result of his position.

If you were in a position where you are the chairman of the company, an executive chairman of the club... I think it gave you, or it gave me a great deal of authority. (Joe - O)

This authority meant that he was above suspicion. Joe (O) reported that some people appeared to be deliberately ignorant by 'turning a blind eye'. The club's ignorance showed because when they identified some suspicious behaviour the executive committee asked the suspected persons to leave quietly to avoid the publicity that the police presence would have caused. Joe (O) used this situation to his advantage, so because of his position of authority and his participation in removing these people from the club this somehow put him above reproach, made him 'untouchable', encouraging the view that if he is doing this how can he possibly be involved in something similar. Joe (O), however, followed a different logic and he subscribed to the notion that if someone doth protest too much then something must be going on. Therefore he questions how, in situations like this, people may be trying to distract others from noticing their own misdemeanour.

Insider status brings with it an inherited trust. A child is naturally very trusting, because they are reliant on others, to love and care for them, as they grow. A child's immaturity also brings with it a child's naive awareness and lack of understanding, due to their age and innocence. This in turn can give way to misunderstandings or imposed understandings from an unreliable source, such as an offender, thus allowing the establishment of deviant norms. An offender's position of trust facilitates this process and increases a child's vulnerability.

I said to the voice in my head I thought well she trusts me... because she has known me quite a long time now, she is used to being around where I am, almost anything that I say she is going to take as fact. (Darren - O)

Because they trusted me, I made me-self likeable... I never had children, any child, male or female, to not like me... 'Oh he is all right he makes me laugh'.  
(John - O)

In fact, trust is so important that potential victims became more attractive to John as time went by and he built their trust.

[Potential victims] get more attractive as time goes like, 'oh see trusts me'.  
(John - O)

Children's natural trust and reliance on parents and caregivers makes them susceptible to being misguided and deceived, so they rely on parents and caregivers to limit their vulnerability as much as possible. It is also important that a child's concerns or allegation are not dismissed just because of the power and status of the offender because this too increases their vulnerability.

#### **b) Increased freedom**

*Increased freedom* to live differently and the rise in *materialism* were predominantly present in the police officers' accounts, specifically the CID officers' accounts and therefore reflect their particular view. However, the relevance of this theme can be inferred from some of the other interviewees' accounts. One reason for the higher prevalence in the police officers' accounts, compared to the other groups, may be because the police officers refer to a cohort of recent cases, whilst the survivors' and victim-offenders' experience of being abused took place in the 1970s and 1980s. The 90s and 21<sup>st</sup> century society seems to reflect an increased desire to own particular things in order to 'fit in', which offers offenders another opportunity to take advantage.

One police officer talked about how society has changed and how the 'fabric of family has gone' (Dave - PO) leaving children more at risk. The word 'fabric' refers to the framework and structure of the family that holds it together. It is no longer inevitable that 'family' constitutes mum, dad, and children; it can involve, for example, single-parents, step-parents, or grandparents as primary carers etc. Given the important role of caregivers as gatekeepers and the proportionately high number of abusive incidents involving step-parents, the traditional family is likely to provide the most protection for children. However, it is essential to acknowledge that sexual

abuse is something that affects ‘every single strata... in society’ (Barry - PO) and is also present in a stereotypical type of family or environment. In fact, Jack’s (S) experience highlights the reality that even families that society may view as ‘ideal’ are vulnerable too, and the police officers accounts provided further examples.

Nonetheless, the police officers’ suggested that changes in family structure may provide more opportunities, than previously, for offenders to access potential victims, for example, either as step-parents or because the extra pressure on single parents to be both mother and father may leave children with increased freedom, especially if parents have to work. The police officers, particularly the CID officers, stated that children’s increased freedom, or lack of monitoring, put them at risk.

He was in there knowing that the mother had got her hands full with smaller kids, so the older ones were left to do a bit more what they wanted. (Dave - PO)

Furthermore, the Internet provides a new source of freedom, which again puts children at more risk only if it is not appropriately monitored; this is discussed in more detail below under the role of new technologies.

One offender provided a more extreme example of how increased freedom in an environment resulted in children’s increased vulnerability. This offender was convicted for abusing a young teenage boy during his time at a nudist club, thus nudity resulted in less restrictions. He said that ‘you are both naked anyway er (pause) that was a big barrier that had been parted’ (Joe - O), he also had greater freedom because of the position of authority he held at the club (see inherited power and status above). Joe (O) also mentioned that a paedophile ring, separate to his own offences, had been identified and asked to leave the club, which suggests that this environment was particularly risky. However the police were not called at the time because of the clubs desire to avoid negative publicity and as such the culture of the club was collusive in their ignorance.

### **c) Materialism**

*Materialism* provides offenders with another influence over potential victims. The theme *Unmet needs* was stated previously as increasing a child’s vulnerability, but in addition to a child’s needs there are also the material things that they desire. In our

consumer society, social identity is often related to what we have or do not have and as such people can be driven by their desire for material possessions. Furthermore, often it is necessary to have certain things in order to 'fit in'. This is relevant in two ways; firstly, the desire to maintain a particular way of life or to own certain material possessions can influence parents working life and this in turn can lead to children's increased freedom due to a reduction in supervision. Secondly, offenders can use potential victims' desires for material possessions to make them more vulnerable to sexual abuse through their use of bribes. This is discussed further as part of the superordinate theme entrapment under cost-benefit analysis, which is presented below.

#### **d) Role of new technologies**

The role of new technologies was a theme predominantly found in the police officers' accounts; it was not discussed by the survivors and was only briefly mentioned by the offenders; however, it is still important to give it some attention here. Once again the reason for the significant absence of this theme in the survivors' and offenders' accounts is likely to be due to the period of time when the instances of abuse took place. The police officers accounts related to very recent incidents and therefore also reflect the recent advances in technology, but the experiences of the other two groups occurred significantly longer ago. However, whilst the use of the Internet had not been part of the offenders' offence chain, two of the offenders specifically showed an interest in the possibilities that the Internet held; John (O) mentioned the possibility of viewing indecent images of children and Dan (O) talked about how he had used chat rooms in the past to meet women, but also that he had been on a chat room intended for lesbians and how he had deceived other members of the chat room about his identity, gender and sexuality. Even those that had not used the Internet in their offending pattern were mostly aware of its potential use.

Because I am doing computers in here [prison] and I want to do it for the right reasons, but he [fellow inmate] reckons you can download horrific porn off of there. (John – O)

The police officers reported that text messages and mobile phones were the bane of their work, because offenders tend to use them to contact their victims. In some cases the offender actually provided the victim with a mobile phone in the first place.

He used to buy her presents and take her here and there, and tell her she was his girlfriend and he bought her a mobile phone that her parents didn't know about. (Eve – PO)

New technologies, such as mobile phones, increase children's vulnerability because of the access afforded to the offender through telephone calls, text messages, picture messaging and the facility to by-pass parents, but also because of today's material world, which requires everyone to have the latest and the best of technology. If a child does not have the financial means to purchase this technology then they may also be more vulnerable because of the desire to acquire it.

Despite high media coverage of Internet grooming cases, police officers stated that they did not deal with a significant number of such cases. Their Internet-related work was primarily in relation to offenders viewing and sharing indecent images of children online. However, they did identify cases where the offender gained access to a child that he would not have been able to gain access to without the Internet, so it does provide greater vulnerability in that respect.

We had a case earlier this year, where a guy was speaking to a young girl, and he managed to get web cams and get in to her computer and all sorts and he pretended to be somebody and he actually went round to her house, knocked on her door one morning and raped her, just arrived and raped her. (Dave – PO)

In addition, with an increased use of Internet dating, children may not be the only people accessed using the Internet; offenders may also use this medium to establish a relationship with a single parent, whose children they go on to abuse. The case of Dan – one of the offenders – using chat rooms to meet women demonstrates the pertinence of this issue.

The Internet increases vulnerability because offenders have anonymity and can therefore deceive both children and adults. The use of the Internet means that a relationship can be developed prior to the offender meeting a potential victim or their family in the real world and thus limits the risks they take. The Internet affords offenders a new freedom both to target a victim and also to view indecent images. These factors may result in moving the offender along the offence chain and move them from fantasy to viewing indecent images and communicating with children



online who are then potential victims. It may provide a bridge between different links in an offender's offence chain.

However, there is a paradox in the role of new technologies elevating vulnerability, because whilst they do provide offenders with greater freedom they also provide the police with a much greater chance of achieving sufficient evidence to prosecute. Evidence is the key to securing a conviction. In the recent past, the best evidence was medical, photographic or testimonies from other victims or witnesses; the Internet and mobile phones now provide the police with a new form of 'hard' evidence because of 'technical bookmarks' (Dave – PO), which facilitate more convictions. There are also more controls on the Internet compared to face-to-face grooming.

Face to face grooming is going to take place with people that are not strangers, so I can't ever see that [SOA 2003] being preventative, because unless you know what is going to happen or what is going through that person's head or you get a vibe straight away as a parent or an outsider looking in; as an untrained individual I can't see it being prevented. Internet, yes, because you have certain controls over usage, but not face to face. (Eve - PO)

Therefore, on the one hand, it could be argued that new technologies facilitate offenders offending; on the other, they can also contribute to reducing vulnerability, because an offender's sexual intent is more easily identified and proven beyond reasonable doubt. This means that more offenders are brought to justice and thus the authorities can monitor them in the future. Furthermore, it allows for proactive policing as in the example below.

They [the police] actually set up a sting where they pretended to be this little girl afterwards and for him to contact her and they arrested him. (Dave – PO)

New technologies act as a double-edged sword with advantages and disadvantages for everyone who uses them, both legally and illegally.

There is the risk, however, that the media focus on the use of new technologies to access and groom victims, particularly the Internet, may act as a distraction and create the illusion that the risk of the Internet is greater than the risk presented by known and trusted adults. The police officers dealt with only a few cases where the victim and offender first met on the Internet; it is still much more likely that a child

will be abused by a friend or relative. The media interest on Internet grooming has the potential for misleading the public in the same way as the old ‘stranger danger’ campaigns.

### **5.1.3 Structural level**

A degree of responsibility for children’s vulnerability to sexual abuse was deemed to be present at a structural level, through its influence via the *role of the authorities* and the *role of the legal system*. Children were more vulnerable as a consequence of the authorities’ failure to act and the failure of the legal system to act as a deterrent to potential offenders.

#### **a) Role of the authorities**

This theme refers to the role of the authorities that have a responsibility to protect children. This included schools, social services, the police and the Catholic Church. This is not an exhaustive list but it represents the authorities discussed by the interview participants. The main criticism made of the authorities was that they failed to act when there was a suspicion of abuse. The main source of criticism was from the adult survivors, who relayed a number of examples of how these authorities failed to act despite there being explicit evidence, in their opinion, that they were being abused. The victim-offenders were less vocal about the failure of the authorities to intervene when they were children; this may be because the victim-offenders were much less concerned about who was responsible for their vulnerability, which again may be due to their construction of vulnerability and tendency to internally attribute the cause of their abuse (see superordinate theme grooming shadow for further discussion). Conversely the police officers were more positive about the role of the authorities in their child protection investigations. This is likely to be due to the police officers’ much more recent experience of social services, which positively suggests that there have been significant improvements.

A couple of the survivors reported a failure of the school and social services to acknowledge that there was a problem at home. Signs that the adult survivors believed should have been obvious to authorities included pictures drawn by the children that signified an abusive environment and injuries that seem out of the ordinary.

I didn't know but they [social services] worked closely with the school and randomly they asked the school to ask me to draw pictures and stuff like that, obviously there was some meaning. It was Christmas time and I drew a picture of my dad with a belt and there was me crying, you know, and obviously this was normal it was fine and they wasn't concerned about this picture at all. Personally I would have been very concerned if someone was drawing that sort of picture at school. (Rachel - S)

Rachel (S) was shocked that these pictures did not stimulate a response. Furthermore, she reported that there was a failure to act even when there were concerns recorded on file.

I remember looking back at my social service file, and they had a record since I was three years old of allegations of sexual abuse and stuff like that. (Rachel - S)

In addition, Susan (S) was surprised at the apparent ignorance of social services and her school regarding the allegations of sexual abuse and also that no one reported the physical abuse, which as she says left very obvious marks.

When I look back, if I am angry about anything I think my main anger is geared towards the authorities because I don't believe that they didn't know, not just about the sexual abuse, because that is even written down and documented, and I can show you that, but they didn't say it like that, they said there were concerns... but the physical violence, and the way I went to school with, you know, whip marks around my legs and my back. (Susan - S)

Whilst the survivors painted a poor picture regarding the role of social services and education, the police gave a different viewpoint, which may highlight a significant improvement in the service delivery. Rachel's (S) experience took place in the mid to late 80s and the early 90s and Susan's (S) experience took place in the late 60s and early 70s, whilst the police experience is of the current situation and appears to be much more positive.

Teachers are a good source of information, because you know sometimes teachers will observe that a young boy or young girl will be different - their attitudes change or what have you - and there are some things that you can

look at that make you think to yourself well I wonder whether that is abuse.  
(Barry – PO)

However, it may be that one's evaluation and experience of the authorities depends on one's perspective, i.e. as a victim or a member of the authorities, or it may be that investigation of abuse is much better than initial identification. Alternatively this difference may be because the victims represent a cohort whose abuse was not detected, whilst the police officers are only aware of the cases that were detected, hence the police officers more positive report.

The role of social workers and teachers is important in child protection and if they are not observant or lack awareness then this makes a child vulnerable to continued abuse. 'They [schools/teachers] have this fantastic interface with children' (Barry - PO). The police officers reported that the best disclosures were the ones that are made via schools because it is possible for them to interview the child before the child has been through the story many times. Whilst this protects evidence it also means that it is possible to protect the child from some of their parent's distress, because the police officers can help the parents respond in an appropriate way. This positivity to disclosure is likely to be the product of more recent improvements in multi-agency working.

The Catholic Church was also accused of ignorance because, even when Jack (S) disclosed his experience of sexual abuse to them as an adult, the church failed to hold the priest accountable even when children were still at risk.

They [the Bishop & the Diocese] knew the man existed and that he [the priest/the abuser] was a teacher in the Diocese, they knew all about him (pause)... so I said 'so what are you going to do about it' and they said 'what do you mean what are we going to do about it', I said 'wha' pardon' and they went 'we are not going to do anything about it'. (Jack - S)

#### **b) Role of the legal system**

The legal system and case law should act as a deterrent to potential offenders because of the risk of getting caught and being convicted; however, the deterrent is not sufficient because disclosure rates are very low and conviction rates are even lower. The lack of deterrence is demonstrated in Glen's (O) comment; Glen (O)

sexually abused his nephew, but has not been convicted of this offence, and does not believe that he will be even though he has confessed.

Because of the length of time (pause) erm [that has passed] I probably won't get done for it anyway. The only way I can get done for it is if my nephew actually makes a complaint, but if he is not prepared to come forward and make a complaint, then they won't do anything with it. (Glen - O)

This also illustrates one frustration voiced by the police officers and that is the need for a complaint. They recognised that the victims' wishes should be taken into account, but it restricts their power to act. The CID officers (Dave & Steve) recalled a recent incident where they were unable to press charges against an offender, because the victim did not want to make a complaint, despite the police having 'hard' evidence in the form of Internet traffic.

The quality of evidence is vital, especially given the difficulty of getting a case to court. The child protection unit officers showed a great dissatisfaction regarding getting cases to court. CID officers had less concern with getting the cases to court; this may highlight a significant difference between extra-familial abuse and intra-familial abuse in terms of obtaining successful conviction. This dissatisfaction was shared by the adult survivors that were interviewed for this study, because none of their respective abusers had been brought to justice through the courts. This was not a focus of the offenders' accounts most probably because, unlike a significant number of abusers, they have been caught and convicted.

The police officers suggested that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) act as a filter, because they will only take cases to court if they are very confident of a conviction. Thus, there appears to be different levels of truth. Jane (PO) explained that it is not about having insufficient evidence to believe the child, but rather not having enough to bring about a conviction.

There are lots that have been convicted, but then there are lots that don't get to court, but that isn't because we haven't had enough to believe the child, but it is having enough to charge them and taking it one step further. (Jane – PO)

This viewpoint is supported by the fact that all the police officers were very confident of getting a conviction if a case got to court. Jane (PO) suggested that the CPS do not 'get a feel for what has gone on', and also that there is the possibility that

they have 'hardened' to it. CPS have the video interviews and all the information on the case but they often still decide not to carry the case forward even though the police officers are convinced of the truth.

But if you have got a traumatised child saying this is what happened... you know 99.9% of what they are telling you is the truth. (Jane – PO)

Dave (PO) also stated that it transpires very quickly whether someone is lying or not; this happens even before the video interview. This assumes that the police officers are the most able to establish the truth. However, it should not be the police or the CPS that establishes the truth but according to the UK legal system it should be a jury.

The judge and jury do not get a chance to consider the evidence unless the CPS deem it to be worthy; it is possible, given that there is enough evidence for the police to be convinced that this would be sufficient for the jury to convict on too.

CPS have set themselves up as judge, jury and executioner, right, so we don't get justice and the hardest cases to prove are child abuse cases. (Barry - PO)

It is a very unfair system that allows individuals (as opposed to a jury) to make the decisions on victims and offenders' fate.

Many years ago, before crown prosecution service came in, if we thought that something merited going to court, we took it to court and if we failed it was the judge and jury that said no this person is not guilty. (Barry – PO)

However, practically it is not possible to take every case to court, but maybe the bar is currently set too high and maybe there would be more convictions if the jury were allowed to consider the evidence.

When you stick that [video interview] in front of a jury, the jury are brilliant because ... the kid can prosecute a case just by the way it looks and winces when it talks to you about what has happened to it. (Dave - PO)

The strongest cases are those that involve more than one victim, who are all willing to make a statement. 'The hardest part is when it is one on one allegations; there is no independent witnesses, or there are no people within the family who have witnessed what has happened, and when there is no medical [evidence]' (Eve - PO). The level of evidence is really important and without evidence such as this, cases stand only a very slim chance of even seeing the courtroom door.

When there is insufficient evidence to prosecute, police officers can request Sex Offender Prevention Orders or Risk of Sexual Harm Orders (SOPO & RoSHO), which require evidence to be weighed against probability rather than beyond reasonable doubt. For this reason, it is important that a child's significant adults, including parents, teachers, neighbours and relatives etc, are observant because their observations could help build up the picture of circumstantial evidence that supports a case for serving one of these orders on an offender.

Hearsay evidence ...if you go and get a statement from a neighbour or something that is sufficient to go forward with a SOPO or RoSHO. (Rose - PO)

The police officers felt that these orders were useful, but the CPS has not deemed it worthy to support any of the applications that have been made for a RoSHO in the county where these police officers serve. Therefore, CPS's failure to use these preventative orders again reduces the legal deterrent and consequently fails to reduce children's vulnerability. The police officers saw the CPS as a barrier preventing justice rather than enforcing justice.

By and large I don't think that it is the government that have made them [RoSHOs & SOPOs] impossible, that is a bunch of solicitors, who really don't want to go and take a chance that they might not get it [conviction]. (Barry - PO)

Furthermore, there is a moral issue about who is on trial - victim or offender - because the legal system determines that the suspect is innocent till prove guilty, which counter-intuitively means that according to this logic the child is a liar until proven to be telling the truth. Unfortunately, a significant number of children never get their day in court and a chance to be found to be telling the truth because of CPS filtering and a lack of acceptable evidence. This puts into question the value of a child's word, which according to the people that interview these children on a daily basis is very honest and when a child does lie they are identified very quickly.

The kids have a certain honesty that you will never find anywhere else. (Dave - PO)

This response only goes to support a child's belief that no-one will believe them just as the offender had told them. This simply adds another string to the offenders bow, because the offender will tell victims some part-truths, such as this, to serve their

own purposes to facilitate a victim's entrapment (for superordinate theme entrapment see below). The need for acknowledgement and to be believed is one factor that affected survivors' grooming shadow and consequently the role of the legal system may contribute to an individual's grooming shadow (for superordinate theme grooming shadow see below).

The police officers raised the question of human rights and how the UK implements the act literally whilst other countries such as France comply without applying the act literally. Why is it children that should give up their rights when it is the offender that has not complied with society's rules. This creates a moral dilemma.

I think that when you do not conform to the map by which society runs, in a proper humane sensible way, then to a degree I think that you do give up some of those rights [human rights]. (Barry - PO)

Furthermore, there was a deep dissatisfaction about the priority of dead victims over live victims, because 'with a murder investigation all the stops are pulled out' (Barry – PO)

When you have got a child abuse victim, you have a live victim, who is living and breathing that abuse and that assault everyday, every minute. (Jane - PO)

Surely a 'live victim' deserves the same priority as a murder victim and more priority than drug users, who are generally adults making that choice for themselves.

99.8% of all murders in this country are detected, somebody gets convicted for them, and the reason for that is that we just throw resources at it. (Barry – PO)

However the targets set by government and police superiors do not allow the same resources and priority to be given to child sexual abuse cases.

We need resources; the unfortunate thing about it is that we are unlikely to get that because the government have set four strands for their crime reduction targeting and that is burglary dwelling, violence on the streets, class A drug dealing and vehicle crime. I am sorry but two of those I don't think come higher than child abuse, but they are the things that we are measured on, so people do what they are measured on. (Barry - PO)

Barry (PO) concludes that 'people are not getting justice because the government have set targets'.



There is a high degree of top-down control where people that are removed from day-to-day practice make decisions about important issues in child protection.

There has been so many enquiries and recommendations over the years, not just the Climbié enquiry but so many that impact directly on child protection and sexual offences particularly - from gathering the evidence to the medicals and the interviews themselves - that so much of it needs to be rehashed and rejigged, but they do it without speaking to the people who deal with these children day in day out. They talk to ACPC, the chief officers of constabularies as opposed to the people that are on the ground; this is our bread and butter, and they don't consult with people that deal with it day in day out. (Jane - PO)

The use of the terms 'rehashed' and 'rejigged' shows their lack of confidence and satisfaction in the process. The sophistication of the system is also in question as one officer felt that despite 'the technology in this country...the police were still using crayons and bits of paper' (Dave - PO).

There are examples where the top-down control has been used effectively, for example a judge awarded a number of consecutive sentences to ensure that the offender had to register on the sex offender list for life. However, the case comparison below demonstrates the inconsistency of the judiciary and the power of discretion.

[One offender got] hammered at court, the judge has got the guidelines again, but he gave a lot of consecutive sentences... all we ultimately proved was the facts of gross indecency where he has been masturbated twice and technically he got 6 ½ years for that. Now I think it became quite evident with the judge doing consecutive sentencing, he identified him as a danger to society and he was good enough to give consecutive sentences... And it is nice to get the support of the judiciary for that. However...I was gob smacked that even though they [two other offenders] had pleaded guilty they only got 4 or 5 years... I mean there was video taped evidence of the 2 or 3 year child getting sexually abused by one of the pair while daddy was filming it. And they get 4 or 5 years for that... but that is the inconsistency [of the judiciary]. (Steve -PO)

Jane (PO) expresses the view that her Detective Sergeant (DS) is brilliant 'but he is only as good as the system allows him to be'. This suggests that the system limits performance. It was very evident from the police interviews that they wanted to catch criminals and improve child protection; however, their sense of powerlessness within the current legal system was also apparent. Their workload is very heavy, so much so that some were surprised that their DS agreed for them to give so much time to this research; because of the crime reduction targets there is not enough funding and furthermore even when they do believe they have a strong case all their work may be in vain if the CPS decide it is not strong enough. They are then left to try and explain this to the victim.

It is very difficult to explain to a child that we [the police] believe you, but it's in everybody's interest that this doesn't go any further or we don't think that if it goes to court we are going to get a conviction. (Jane – PO)

This powerlessness is also seen in Jane's (PO) comment on training that 'it's down to the individuals to equip themselves and it is trial and error as well' (Jane - PO). This dissatisfaction with the system is widespread. The general opinion is that specialist training is lacking. The CPU reported that they were due to go on a training course around the time of the interview, but they could not in the end; they presumed this was because of funding issues. The CID officers reported that they did not receive very much specialist training specific to paedophilia. Steve (PO) also said that 'within the general CID office [they] tend to be Jack-of-all-trades and master of none'. The feeling across the board was that training is really important because 'knowledge is power' (Jane – PO) and the police officers generally found the new SOA confusing and felt that they needed training to get to grips with it.

Because of our lack of training, as far as the legislation is concerned, we tend to shy away from it... if the law was more user friendly possibly...and the legislation was less complex... people would be less frightened to use it. (Dave – PO)

However, even when they understood it they found that CPS was still more likely to opt for an older offence and one that they are more familiar with. Consequently, lack of resources, inappropriate targets, the lack of priority for live-child victims, more focus on an offender's human rights than a child victim's, top-down control and a lack of training lead to fewer offenders being caught and subsequently

convicted, which in turn makes a fallacy of the legal deterrent and thus increases children's vulnerability.

## **5.2 Awareness**

This theme relates to *survivors' and offenders' awareness of vulnerability* and their subsequent *vigilance or risk* to children, either directly or indirectly. Awareness can lead to increased risk through deliberate targeting by an offender or greater protection from significant adults. Alternatively, a lack of awareness can result in deliberate or inadvertent action or inaction by significant adults, which subsequently increases a child's vulnerability.

### **5.2.1 Survivors' and offenders' awareness of vulnerability**

The survivors specifically mentioned observing others and wondering if they were victims too. Rachel (S) and Susan (S) stated that they used to watch other children in the playground and wondered if they too were being abused.

I used to be in the playground at school; I used to look at the children around me and think did it happen to them, and try and do you know what I mean, just one of those things that you do, whether it is happening to other people, but as I got older I used to look at different behaviours in children and I used to think, they always used to say that the quiet reserved ones. I've always thought to myself I could go in to a playground and pick out a kid who would be a target from sexual abuse, I'm not so sure about that now, probably just a (unclear) idea of my own. I think a lot of kids when they are abused are angry and don't know how to deal with their emotions because of it, and I think, it's not always true to say that children that are abused are quiet and passive, because I don't believe that at all because I definitely wasn't quiet and passive and totally the opposite, very loud and aggressive towards other children my own age. (Susan - S)

The survivors were aware that victims behaved and responded in different ways, for example by being sometimes loud and acting out and sometimes quiet and withdrawn.

As adults, Susan (S), Jack (S) and Paul (S) all reported feeling that others could identify them as having been victims of CSA. Paul (S) believed that '[everyone]

could see through [him]'. Susan (S) went on to say that she now believed that she could identify others' vulnerability.

Recently now when I look at people, I think, I think I see signs that they have been abused. Whereas beforehand I used to think that people could see that I had been abused; I don't think that anymore. (Susan - S)

Jack (S) was astonished when he saw vulnerability in a physical way in someone else.

She started talking and she was young, she had a baby; she was in her late teens. She talked about how her man, her boyfriend of many, many years, who was in his late thirties it was like OK and then it was actually like she led in to a conversation where she's actually talking about stuff without realising that it was abuse and she did this funny little jig, physical thing and I just (pause) in a way it was the sign that I've always thought I had somehow and she was showing this sign and it was just like it was something very physical. It's really strange I can't explain it anymore, but it was like wow you're saying all this and it's like it was something about availability, it was something about availability and it ran a real cord with me, about how I felt about myself, then seeing it in someone else as an actual physical thing it was just like profoundly wow. (Jack - S)

Awareness of vulnerability in children and adults is important because of the risk of re-victimisation and the possibility of an *intergenerational transmission of risk* (see below).

The above accounts of survivors' awareness of vulnerability are based on the survivors' opinions. However offenders' awareness is apparent in their successful 'grooming' of their victims. The offenders' awareness of their victims' vulnerability was for some offenders explicit and for others implicit with them only recognising their awareness of this vulnerability retrospectively; however, this denial of awareness may have simply been another downward comparison, so that their behaviour did not seem so bad relative to others whose behaviour they viewed as targeted or deliberate. Some offenders, for example Joe (O), did not acknowledge an explicit awareness, but instead talked about a 'subconscious' awareness. Joe was very aware about what was going on around him despite claiming his awareness was 'subconscious'. He did, however, provide clear indications that he was aware of his victim's vulnerability, but he did this by talking in the third person.

If the parents were forever shouting at that child – for god sake do it, don't you have any bloody commonsense – er they [offenders] could probably home in on that sort of thing, you know, get him on his own – 'what's wrong, tell me what's wrong, don't you get on with your parents'. (Joe - O)

He also stated that offenders are likely to be good at identifying and then using vulnerabilities.

I would probably think that there was a strong probability that they [offenders] are very good at picking up erm (pause) (cough) something as simple as like for instance Mark saying that his parents didn't help him with his homework, he didn't get on with his father, and his father was always shouting at him, his mother spent more time running after Martin junior er etc, etc, so you probably, I probably wasn't aware of it but subconsciously. (Joe - O)

Furthermore, Joe (O) was very aware of the power that his position as chairman of the nudist club afforded him.

I got the feeling they were putting out feelers, you know, was he (Joe - O) sort of in to the same thing that we were, so lets invite him and we'll sort of roll about on the bed... let's see if we can draw him in and if we draw him in; the fact that you have got the chairman of the company and the club involved in it, it would give you free reign. (Joe - O)

The other offenders more readily accepted that they were aware of their victims' vulnerabilities. Gary (O), for example, made this very explicit.

She [victim] was a little bit slow at school, she was a little bit self-conscious, she was in fact a lot self-conscious, she was shy, she was withdrawn and I now realise that I recognise all these points of vulnerability. (Gary - O)

Gary (O) was also aware of his victim's mother's vulnerability.

Her [victims' mother's] husband had died very early, very young, erm from septicaemia and I met her a couple of years after that. She was fairly vulnerable and I recognised that. (Gary - O)

Similarly, Glen (O) recognised that his victim was vulnerable. Furthermore, Glen (O) recognised similarities between himself as a victim and his nephew as a victim, although he states that this was not explicit at the time.

When I was his age I was sort of similar to him, you know shy and all the rest of it, yeah so maybe my cousin saw a weakness in me... maybe I saw the same weakness in Peter [nephew/victim] (pause) even though I didn't realise it at the time. (Glen - O)

The offenders were aware of what they could get away with; Gary (O) even reasoned with himself and said, 'I can get away with this.' Being a trusted adult was significant and Darren (O) knew that his position meant that his victim would believe whatever he told her. John (O) was also aware that he had free reign as long as his 'mate' was pacified.

Me mate just wanted his drink, I could have stripped them all naked and raped them all; as long as he got a can he weren't bothered. (John - O)

The offenders' awareness of their victims' vulnerability was further reinforced when their victims did not disclose.

Offenders' awareness of victims' vulnerability was emphasised further when Glen (O) made a clear distinction between someone that was vulnerable and someone that was not.

He [youngest sister's son] was perfectly safe because he had too much of a big mouth on him, as far as I was concerned too close to his family, to his parents, far too close, so maybe I was looking at Peter [nephew/victim] as being vulnerable like I was - the home he came from, the same home I came from. (Glen - O)

He also identified that abuse within the family is very difficult to prove and challenge. This highlights his awareness of family members increased vulnerability.

Most abusers are actually within the family; most of them are actually there within the family, believe it or not, most of them are there within the family. They didn't know I was an abuser; me sister may have had her suspicions, but nobody knew anything. What are you supposed to do? Well we have got our suspicions about you, you can't come anymore, you can't do that - prove it (pause) - know what I mean, so (pause) urm family's are not going to start vetting each other to see if they are safe round the kids; that is not going to happen (laugh). (Glen - O)

### 5.2.2 Vigilance or risk

The offenders and survivors reported varying degrees of awareness, as detailed in the previous theme. Increased awareness can result in either vigilance to reduce children's vulnerability or as a means of increasing their vulnerability, as in the case of the offenders. A lack of awareness also increases children's vulnerability and risk. The interviewees' accounts seem to suggest that survivors and offenders *vigilance and awareness maybe due to risk of harm* and furthermore that there is a possibility of an *intergenerational transmission of risk*, so that children of victims are at more risk of being victimised.

#### a) Vigilance and awareness due to risk of harm

All but one of the survivors and all of the offenders reported a vigilance and awareness of individuals' vulnerabilities. Three interviewees make a clear link between their childhood risk of harm and their later awareness. Paul (S) and Glen (O) both reported that they were aware of other people's vulnerabilities because they were aware of their own vulnerabilities. Paul (S) recalled that he was able to identify vulnerable women and that in the past he had used that to take advantage of them, but after completing the SOTP and having counselling he would like to help them instead.

I find myself looking at someone, their behaviour, and saying to myself, you know, something is going on behind the scenes... I recognise insecurities in other people and I think that has come from recognising my own. (Paul – S)

Glen (O) explained that it was his awareness of his and his nephew's similarities and the fact that they had the same upbringing that increased his awareness of his victim's vulnerability.

But don't forget he was living with my parents... he [Glen's father] would whack all the time, just exactly the same as it was with us [Glen and his siblings] - exactly the same. (Glen - O)

However, Gary (O) explained that he became acutely aware of his abuser's behaviour as a kind of survival mechanism, in an attempt to read the warning signals that indicated when he was in danger. He was also aware of the sort of things that may prevent potential harm.

I got to know my father so well that I could divert his attention from giving me a beating erm (pause) and I could distract him from doing that and likewise I would distract my mother from her sexual activities by saying something that I knew would make her feel guilty. Erm but equally I could, I was also manipulative enough to be able to train myself, that when my father did hit me, I would refuse to cry; I would just stand there and take it and take it, no matter what he did to me, I would stand and take it, because it was only when I started crying that he would get really, really violent and start calling me a wimp and a little girl and all the rest of it, so I realised very early that by doing that he wouldn't get to the extent of (unclear – fury), so yeah I became quite clever at manipulating, yeah. (Gary - O)

Gary's (O) comment also indicates that his prior risk of harm may have provided a training ground for developing vigilance and thus an ability to manipulate.

Whilst five of the offenders experienced childhood sexual abuse and violence, and may thus have inadvertently developed a skill to be vigilant of other people's behaviour due to the previous risk of harm, Joe (O) did not. However, it seems that Joe (O) may have developed similar skills, because of the risk of harm associated with his sexuality.

When I was younger it was still illegal (pause) to get involved (pause) in relationships, gay relationships; that was still seen as an illegal act... you had to go along covering it all up (intake of breath), so you actually, you were living a lie. (Joe - O)

Therefore, Joe (O) was used to covering things up and presenting himself in the way that he wished to be portrayed; this was further reinforced by his parents, who were very concerned about how they presented themselves.

I was very conscious of them [parents] always checking themselves you know were they correct, so I probably picked all these sort of things [perfectionist] up subconsciously from them, (pause) I can always remember my father saying where people make the big mistake, he said, they may have a fresh shirt on, nice tie, good suit, he said and their shoes are dirty, he said, lets you down; he said that's the thing that I notice, that's something I thought mmm? (Joe - O)



Joe reported that, during his time at the nudist club, it was very important that people did not know about his sexuality, as this would have likely meant denial of his membership.

If people had known that I was gay I probably wouldn't have been a member of the club. (Joe - O)

Joe (O) was more vigilant about how he presented himself because of his family's preoccupation with self-presentation and his need to hide his sexuality for fear of rejection. Joe's (O) self-awareness may have acted as a training ground for vigilance in relation to his later offending because he was very aware of how people saw him, so he was very careful to make the right impression and avoid suspicion and where necessary he adapted his behaviour accordingly.

So people watch what everybody else is up to, so this is why I was always very careful... so I left him [victim] to do what he was doing during the day; I just carried on with my usual thing. (Joe - O)

His life existed in a number of different 'compartments' with no or very little interaction between them, so his life during the week at work was separate from his life as the chairman of the nudist club at the weekend and so his life as a child sex offender was confined to his caravan in the evenings where the risk of being caught was at a minimum and he did not allow himself to give his victim undue attention during the day because this would have increased the chance that he would have been caught.

Furthermore, vigilance and awareness appears not only to be due to a risk of harm in the past, but also as a consequence of present risk. Joe (O) talked about his vigilance and awareness as an 'inbuilt survival thing' because of the increased risk of harm associated with being caught. The use of the term 'survival of the fittest' and 'I will survive' demonstrate that the offenders were aware of a risk of harm to themselves.

I come first, survival of the fittest and all that and I will survive. (Glen - O)

Furthermore, Gary (O) rightly points out that 'sex offenders are particularly vulnerable people, especially in the prison environment and so they become very good at judging people for their honesty' to maintain self-preservation.

Offenders are at risk of harm prior to disclosure because of the risk of disclosure and they are at risk of harm following disclosure because of the nature of their crimes.

Thus, the risk of harm associated with being a child sex offender may provide another explanation for heightened vigilance and awareness. The risk of harm present in childhood may act as a distal factor, whilst the presence of a risk of harm associated with being a child sex offender may act as a proximal factor increasing offenders' levels of vigilance and awareness.

### **b) Intergenerational transmission of risk**

An intergenerational transmission of risk relates to the vulnerability to abusive experiences of one generation as a consequence of the abusive experiences of the previous generation i.e. their parents. This was particularly evident in some of the survivors' accounts. Paul (S) explained that his mother, who experienced physical abuse as a child, and his grandparents were aware that his father was violent and would have a go at his father, but his father would say 'it is not doing him no harm; I was beaten as kid, it didn't do me no harm'. This violent environment made Paul (S) more vulnerable to his sexual abuser's attention and it also increased his fear of disclosure. Similarly, Rachel (S) was also more vulnerable to abuse as consequence of her mother's prior victimisation and subsequent distorted attitude that abuse was normal.

Caroline (S) explained that her son was also sexually abused and she believed that there had been an intergenerational transmission of risk; she went so far as to say that she was the first perpetrator in her son's abuse because she had made him vulnerable.

Like my son got abused, I say it was my fault he was abused... I was spiteful to my son when he was little, I couldn't get over my problems, so I was constantly shouting at him, constant, and I used to smack him... and I think that because I had broken his confidence... I hadn't boosted him to give him confidence, I had broken his confidence, and that he was open to abuse because they go for the quiet little ones that are in the corner of the playground with nobody to play with, that is who they home in on, well that's who my son was because I had knocked the stuffing out of him. So you can blame his sexual abuse on me that was my fault. (Caroline - S)

This intergenerational transmission of risk was linked to Caroline's (S) lack of awareness due to her own needs and the continued effects of her on abuse (see superordinate theme grooming shadow for further discussion).

The police accounts offered some support to the existence of an intergenerational transmission of risk.

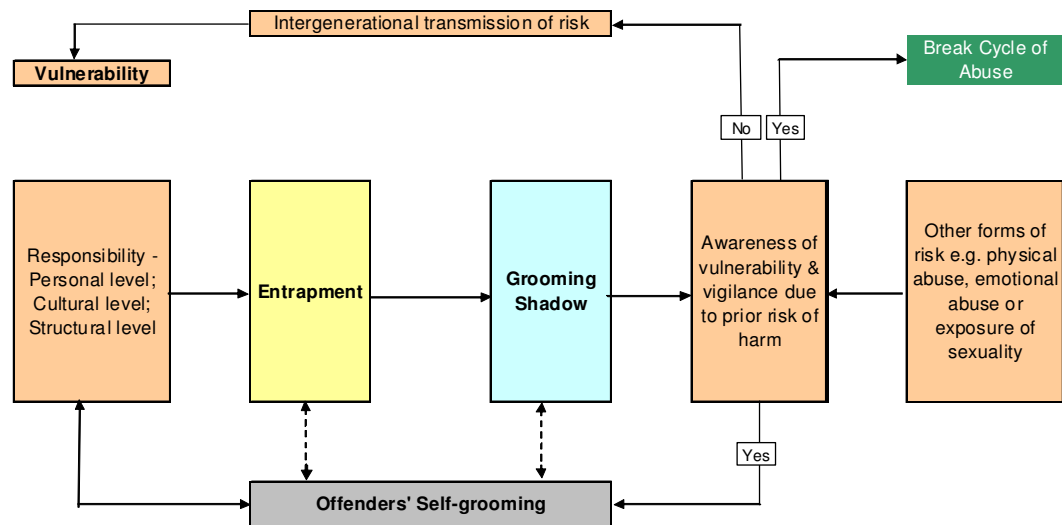
We [the police] do have a lot [of parents/mothers] who were abused as children... and it is when their child discloses... they decided to tell us.  
(Jane – PO)

Furthermore, a parent increases a child's vulnerability if they go 'from one risky offender to another' (Jane – PO). Previous victimisation is predictive of future victimisation. Offenders are able to identify parents' vulnerabilities as well as children's vulnerabilities. An intergenerational transmission of risk means that the latter is significantly increased by the former. There are many cases where this is not true, but it presents an increase in vulnerability.

## Summary

This superordinate theme described children's vulnerability (see Figure 1, overleaf, for a pictorial representation of this theme). The responsibility for children's vulnerability was found to exist at a personal level, through the role of caregivers and offenders; at a cultural level, through the inherited power and status of offenders, increased freedom in how to live, materialism and through the role of new technologies; and at a structural level, through the role of the authorities and the legal system. The ultimate factor that determines children's vulnerability is the motivation of offenders; however, all the other factors compound together to increase a child's vulnerability and possibility that an offender will target them. Individuals' awareness of vulnerability was also found to have a significant effect on children's vulnerability. Awareness can be used either to protect children or to make them more vulnerable. The offenders used their awareness and vigilance to target victims, whilst the survivors were more likely to use their awareness to prevent abuse or help vulnerable people. A lack of awareness, however, can lead to an intergenerational transmission of risk. A child's level of vulnerability has a significant impact on the offenders likely success of entrapping them in a cycle of abuse (see superordinate theme entrapment below) and also on the offenders' self-

grooming, including their cost-benefit analysis of the risk of disclosure; this theme is presented in the next chapter.



**Figure 1 – Vulnerability**

## Chapter 6 - Offenders' self-grooming

This chapter presents the findings relating to the superordinate theme offenders' self-grooming, which, according to Finklehor's Precondition Model (1984), relates to offenders overcoming their internal inhibitors. Offenders' self-grooming included three subordinate themes: *attribution for offending*, *perceived power to desist* and *cost-benefit analysis*. Self-grooming is the gradual process through which the offender becomes entrenched in their offending chain/cycle. The progression of the self-grooming process is epitomised in Glen's (O) comment about his reduction in guilt.

I would walk away feeling (pause) depressed (laugh), not as depressed as I was the first time. (Glen - O)

The first of these subordinate themes considers how offenders either externally or internally attributed their offending. The second subordinate theme relates to offenders' perceived power or powerlessness to desist from offending. Finally, the third subordinate theme looks at the cost-benefit analysis involved in the decision to offend. See Table 6 below for an overview of this theme.

**Table 6 - Superordinate theme offenders' self-grooming**

Offenders' Self-grooming	Attribution for offending	External attribution	Dangerous world
			Mutual consent
			Downward comparison
	Perceived power	Internal attribution	
		Perceived powerlessness to desist	
		Perceived power to desist	
	Cost-benefit analysis	Offenders' self-focus	
		Testing victim	
		Could, so did	
		Compartmentalisation	

### 6.1 Attribution for offending

At the time of their offences all of the offenders externally attributed their behaviour; however, differences appeared post-treatment. This theme will present evidence of offenders' *external* and *internal attribution*.

### 6.1.1 External attribution

Justification formed a large part of offenders' external attributions and offenders justified their actions because they believe they live in a *dangerous world*; they also convinced themselves that their victim(s) gave *mutual consent*. Furthermore, offenders made *downward comparisons* to people and behaviour that they believed to be worse than their abusive actions in order to justify that what they were doing was not that bad. Gary (O) reported retrospectively that '[he] was justifying [his] actions to [him]self as much as to her [victim]' This clearly demonstrates the self-grooming process in action. John (O) also made it clear that he distorts things to justify his behaviour.

I'll distort it to get my own way; to justify what I am doing is right. It is helping the girl grow up, become a slag then (laugh)... because they are all going to grow up to be prostitutes anyway, in my head. (John - O)

Furthermore, offenders' external attributions and justification for their offending was also closely linked to their motivation to offend, details of which are presented under the superordinate theme vulnerability – personal level and role of offenders' motivation – but a brief account will be given here.

#### a) Dangerous world

At the time of the offences Gary (O) was feeling very low and he began drinking very heavily. He had just lost his job and he believed his girlfriend was having an affair; she was the victims' mother, so it was this relationship that made them vulnerable. He became very self-focused and thought that others' ought to suffer too.

I got to the stage where I couldn't care less, where whatever I did was going to be OK, because I was upset, so why shouldn't everyone else be upset. (Gary - O)

Similarly, John's (O) understanding of the world was that everyone was out to hurt him, so he should hurt others before they hurt him.

I thought you can't trust anybody... I have carried it right through to present day, basically. I think, I am going to get harmed - I'll try first. (John - O)

### **b) Mutual consent**

Some of the offenders justified their offending by convincing themselves that their respective victim(s) consented and was therefore a willing participant and as such that their victim enjoyed the abusive behaviour. Gary (O) acknowledged that with one victim he was abusing her in defiance, whilst he believed that his other victim was consenting.

Again on reflection the developing closeness of the relationship, the sort of empathy we had for each other, erm allowed me to think that it was OK to do what I was doing erm that it was what she wanted...I recognise everyone for what they are now but you know I made all these excuses that it was a natural thing, anyway she loved me and I could do this to her anyway because you know I was the adult. We were best friends and all the rest of it and it didn't matter that I was 50 years old and she was only 10 years old, that didn't matter at all; we were very close to each other so it was OK – justified.  
(Gary- O)

Joe (O), also, explicitly mentioned mutual consent. Joe (O) passed the responsibility of the abuse on to his victim by supposedly allowing the victim to say no to the abuse. The victim's response or at least their perceived response was important to the offender's next step.

I probably subconsciously again thought... I'll give him plenty of time and (pause/cough)... are you actually absolutely certain that you want this to go ahead and you know while we are in bed together and all this sort of thing, are you sure you want this to go ahead, 'oh yes, yeah, yeah', so I convinced myself yes it was mutual consent and it was a relationship. (Joe - O)

Joe (O) externalised his offending through his belief that his sexual relationship with his victim was only illegal because it was against the law to have homosexual intercourse under the age of twenty-one, thus he suggested that his crimes were attributable to the legal context of the time as opposed to his deviant desires; thus justifying that his offence *per se* was externally attributable.

Glen (O) also passed responsibility to his victim by saying the following: -

I always said to him you don't have to do anything you don't want to do.  
(Glen - O)

He reported later that he thought this message had sunk in because his nephew was very stubborn and that if he didn't want to do something that he would just say 'NO'. This belief further justified Glen's (O) belief that his victim was mutually consenting. Furthermore, John (O) viewed his victims as willing participants because he believed that since the girls that had abused him seemingly enjoyed these experiences then his victims would also enjoy them; as such, he said that he would not have full intercourse with them, because he had not been shown that, so they cannot have liked it.

### **c) Downward comparison**

The offenders' external attributions were aided by their use of downward comparison relative to other people and behaviour, which they considered to be worse than their own behaviour. This meant that they justified or minimised their offending behaviour by comparing themselves and their behaviour to others, which acted as a form of self-protection and justification for past and future offending.

Joe (O) justified the abuse of his victim through downward comparison. He perceived his victim as much older than he was because of his physical size and this allowed him to consider their 'relationship' to be acceptable.

He was tall, I mean he was (pause) by the time he was fifteen he was actually taller than me with broad shoulders and things, so it wasn't as if it was some (pause) what you would think of as a fifteen year old (pause) boy. (Joe - O)

Furthermore, he gave an account of another child sex offender that he was aware of and commented that this person was a caricature paedophile. Thus, suggesting that he, Joe (O), was not as bad in relative terms.

Bill was rather, he was almost (pause) you know these caricature paedophiles, if you can imagine them with a sort of raincoat scouring through the woods, that sort of person, who you would think there's something; keep your eye on that one. (Joe - O)

John (O) too made a downward comparison to other offenders and concluded that because he was selective about his victims he was not so bad.



If I had been a proper, a really nasty one [paedophile], just wanted a child for sex all the while no matter who they were; as long as I got, it I wanted it... If I were really evil I could have done that. (John - O)

On the one-hand he was distancing himself from other paedophiles and on the other-hand he suggested that all paedophiles were the same with the following comment.

For me she'd, any paedophile would go crazy over her. I don't know how she were walking on her own, I mean it's her right to, but to me I am thinking you couldn't let her go on her own like that, because people like me jump all over her, you know what I mean. (John - O)

John (O) seemed to almost suggest that this little girl or her parents invited his deviant interest through her choice of clothes etc., so he seemed to justify his behaviour further by accepting this myth. John (O) vindicated his behaviour further when he made a distinction between 'horrific porn' and 'nice porn', and his preference for the latter, thus putting himself further up the pecking order. As an afterthought John (O) admitted that it was about choosing between different levels of 'poison'.

I don't want the horrific porn; I'd want the nice porn... I'll have a Consulate cigarette instead of a full strength one, because that is nice and sweet, but still poison to you in't it. (John - O)

John (O) also considered TWOC (Taking Without Consent) offenders to be worse than himself because they have many more victims and his comments suggest that he feels very hard done by. He has to consider the impact of his crimes and sign the sex offenders register where as TWOC offenders are free to leave prison and commit further offences.

I thought I haven't got 117 victims and families and that to consider. No because it was only a car you see. A bit of metal not destroying that woman's livelihood or that bloke's livelihood because they can't get to work and they can't, they don't think of the ripple, like I have had to think with my victims. But he don't have to go on the sex on a register when he gets out. (John - O)

A further comparison was made between John's (O) deviancy and lesbianism. On the one hand he was non-committal about his view of lesbianism but on the other hand he made a direct comparison between lesbianism and paedophilia, suggesting that they were as bad as each other.

Years later I have seen two of the girls, who I used to play with, not saying lesbianism is wrong, but they were both lesbians... because I do see some deviance in their part (lesbianism) ... but (pause) when they throw it at me 'they are consenting adults', that doesn't make a deviancy right in my eye, no matter what it is. (John - O)

Glen (O) made a clear downward comparison between himself, who self-disclosed his offences, and repeat offenders. This became clear when he was asked whether he thought the public should be made aware when a child sex offender is living in their community. His response shows a clear opinion that he considers himself to be relatively better than repeat offenders and thus deserves to be given a chance to get on with his life.

People who have done it (pause) once, sort of like me, or done what I have done in prison and come out and said this is what I have done then no I think that you should (unclear) you should give me a break and let me try and get on with me life. (Glen - O)

Dan (O) suggested that his daughter's drinking and possible drug taking had some comparable effect on her as his sexual abuse had on her. In saying this he seemed to be trying to diminish the perceived harm caused by his abusive behaviour.

They had a big party in the house, drinking and drinking er. I'm quite sure she, her boyfriend was taking drugs, but the drugs I was talking about then was erm LSD and er grass, because I could smell the smoke on her, but I couldn't, I never caught her smoking. I believe that also had an effect on her as what I did had an effect on that as well. (Dan - O)

It was very interesting to note that Darren (O) and Gary (O) did not use downward comparison, but rather accepted full responsibility for their actions. It is possible that this is as a result of the SOTP and that they did use downward comparison at the time of their offences. However, the people (Darren (O) and then Gary (O)) that justified their behaviour least seemed to be the most traumatised by what they had done and in my opinion are the least likely to reoffend. This demonstrates the potential role of justification and downward comparison as a defence mechanism used by offenders to limit the impact of committing such offences on themselves.

Furthermore if the offences committed by the offenders were graded according to severity Darren's (O) and Gary's (O) offences, from what I understand about their offences based on their accounts, would be less severe than those committed by the other offenders. Therefore it is feasible to suggest that justification and downward comparison increases in line with offenders' deviant behaviour.

### **6.1.2 Internal attribution for offending**

Joe never internalised that he had abused his victim whilst Dan (O) appeared to only accept this to avoid being seen as minimising, which he realised post-treatment would be seen as denial. However, John (O), Darren (O) and Gary (O) and to some extent Glen (O) internalised that they were child sex offenders. The impact of this internalisation was different for Darren (O) and Gary (O) than it was for John (O).

In contrast to the other offenders, Gary (O) and Darren (O) showed much more concern for their victims and internally attributed the impact of their crimes. It appears that the SOTP has helped them become less self-focused. Previously Gary (O) showed self-focus by stating that he had felt that, if he was hurting then, 'why shouldn't everyone else hurt too'; however, post-treatment this self-focus was no longer present.

If Becky [victim] had spoken about it to anyone else, yes I would still have been punished, but she would have been saved some of the anxiety. (Gary - O)

Darren (O) had previously shown self-focus by attempting to take his own life, but post-treatment he appreciated how this would have impacted his family.

I knew then that I was going to die and I would be away from all this and it was so selfish because I never thought about the effects on my family or anyone else; it is so selfish. (Darren - O)

Darren (O) and Gary (O) stated that recognising what they had done and the impact on their victims, and subsequently admitting their guilt, was instrumental in the internalisation process.

It does change the way you see yourself when you see what you have done. (Darren - O)

Furthermore, this internal attribution and taking the responsibility for their offending, along with the knowledge that they had the choice and power to change

(see next section for discussion of this), were the most significant factors identified by Gary (O) and Darren (O) as affecting their desistence from future offending.

Yeah as I say that was probably the biggest step; that admission of full guilt was probably the biggest step to the development of the way I think now.  
(Gary - O)

However, the impact of the course was not universal because as stated previously Dan (O) seemed to be minimising, so the course may have affected his responses as he attempted to disguise his true attributions and opinions. Furthermore, the impact of internally attributing the knowledge that they were a child sex offender was also not universal. For Darren (O) and Gary (O) this process of internalisation was painful.

It hurts me so much inside, deep inside to know that I am actually a paedophile. I have had to accept that and I do accept it, but I am not happy with it and I am determined for the future that I will not be... There are no excuses; we are all responsible for our actions. (Darren - O)

They both reported that the victim empathy aspect of the SOTP made a significant impact and as such internal attribution had a positive effect on them.

The thing that surprised me most about the whole sordid experience was the fact that I had grown up with abuse and then I became an abuser... I thought to myself well you can't get any lower now; you have now become your father... in some ways a large part of me was destroyed. (Gary - O)

On the other hand, internalising the fact that he was a child sex offender had quite the opposite effect on John (O). When a doctor told Darren (O) that his sexuality would not change he set out to manage and control it. John (O), however, responded to society by saying 'If I am a paedophile, right, I will prove it' and he decided that if he was a paedophile then he would do it to the best of his ability. He was void of a motivation to desist or awareness that he had to the power to control his sexual urges. Even after completing the SOTP he did not demonstrate the power to choose a different path. Instead he said 'my next victim might not even be born yet' (John - O). In fact, he stated that it would be a 'bonus' for him to die in prison.

## 6.2 Perceived power

All the offenders seem to have accepted that they were responsible for stopping themselves from re-offending. However, there were differences in their perceived power to do this. Some offenders had a *perceived powerlessness to desist* whilst others had a *perceived power to desist*.

### 6.2.1 Perceived powerlessness to desist

The offenders all claimed that at the onset of the abuse there had been no prior planning or efforts made by them to initiate a 'relationship' and that it just happened, a common statement made by many child sex offenders. All the offenders discussed this inferred perceived powerlessness. Joe (O) talked about 'slipping' into abusing his victim, which suggests a perceived powerlessness; however, at another time he talked about 'creeping' in to it, which depicts more deliberate behaviour and thus emphasises the 'perceived' aspect of his perceived powerlessness.

John (O) felt that if he was a paedophile, he ought to do it to the best of his ability and, in fact, he openly confessed that his next victim 'might not be born yet', which demonstrates his perceived powerlessness to desist from offending. Therefore his view was that he could not change. Glen (O) also felt powerless to stop himself from abusing another boy if he was faced with the opportunity.

I could never have heterosexual friends and start going to their houses and having dinner with them... The next thing you know, say they did that and they got a boy or have got two boys like, know what I mean, that's, that's (laugh) that can't happen. Then the next minute they will want me to babysit and go to the bathroom with them and I can't (pause) because I would have abused him, straight away here and now I would have abused him, simple as, and I can't allow that to happen... got to stay away from me, simple as, for their protection. (Glen - O)

John's (O) perceived powerlessness was demonstrated through his alignment of his sexual offending with that of a drug addiction with reference to needing to get his 'fix'. Furthermore, John (O) is a strong believer in fate and luck as demonstrated in his account of this incident.

I was sat watching some lads playing football and little girls come up on roller skates, trigger - roller skates. I wouldn't even have to look at her, I could hear them and I am wishing and hoping and praying that she would be wearing this, they'll have this, this, this, this. If she hadn't she'd be safe. If she had that's *fate*, she's sent to me. (John - O)

Glen (O) described how he felt like something or someone was taking over him and that it was simply a case of 'I saw it, I wanted it, I had it - that's it' (Glen - O). He later spoke about how he felt like a magnet when he visited his sister and nephew, who had just got out of the bath and was naked.

It was like he was a sheet of steel and I'm a magnet being drawn to it, because I couldn't keep my eyes off him. (Glen - O)

This reference to being like a magnet demonstrates his feeling of powerlessness in the situation, or at least that is how he understood it. Gary (O) too alludes to his feeling of powerlessness as he described his journey in to offending with a description that conjured up an image of walking into quicksand.

And then all of a sudden there I was ankle deep in this abuse, sinking rapidly down towards my neck and I suddenly realised that this was the pits I couldn't get any lower. (Gary - O)

It seemed to take him by surprise and by the time he realised what was happening he was disgusted with himself, he later said 'I didn't know how to stop', which goes to support this feeling of being trapped in quicksand and not being able to get out. Glen (O) echoed this comment about not knowing how to stop.

I felt guilty; I felt depressed... But at the same time although I was doing these things, I didn't want to do these things I wanted it to stop, stop dead, and that's (pause) all of this was playing on my mind because I am doing something with him that I shouldn't be doing and I don't want to be doing, but at the same time I can't stop me self from doing. (Glen - O)

Joe's (O) perception was not just of his lack of control but that the victim was in control he demonstrated this by his observation of another offender and how the victim apparently led the offender around. This also reflected the control that he perceived his victim to have.

It was again probably subconscious (pause) thing why other people sitting and talking about, watching other people and how they had noticed how his

eyes never leave him, he is always following him about and it is Martin [Joe's victim's brother] that's controlling, when Martin goes somewhere it is Patrick [Martin's abuser] who is always following him, so he [Martin] is always like leading Patrick about on a lead. That was all probably subconscious, don't do anything like that (pause) because that immediately draws people's attention. (Joe - O)

This apparent control is depicted in the suggestion that the victim led the offender around on a 'lead', which conjures up the image of a dog and owner. This was a misperception that served to support his justification for the abuse.

The state of the offenders' lives was also used to demonstrate this perceived powerlessness. Glen (O) said '[his] life was a mess' and described it like 'a house of cards' and goes on to say that 'it is crumbling down; everything seems to be falling to pieces all round [him]'. He uses this illustration to show the fragility of his life.

Alcohol was presented as a significant influence on offenders' behaviour because most offenders were drinking heavily at the time of their offences. This factor provides one contributory factor for understanding their perceived powerlessness, because of the inhibitory nature of alcohol.

### **6.2.2 Perceived power to desist**

At the time of the interviews there was a clear distinction between the offenders that were burdened with guilt and who subsequently used this to aid their desistence from future offending and the offenders that felt that their conscience was clear; they were serving their punishment, so that was an end to it. Gary (O) and Darren (O) were committed to manage their risk whilst the others continued with what seemed like clear consciences. There has to be an awareness of one's power to control and manage one's own behaviour and also a desire to use it.

Gary (O) and Darren (O) described how their perceived powerlessness prior to completing the SOTP caused them 'turmoil' and to attempt suicide respectively. The SOTP made them aware of their power of choice and their ultimate responsibility for their choices.

You're walking down the road and you have got lots of different avenues and you're the only person who can choice that avenue, no one can choice it for

erm you can make all the excuses in the world you want but if you choice the wrong avenue, it was your choice. (Gary - O)

They felt the SOTP gave them a 'tool bag' of strategies to help them manage their thoughts and behaviour. Darren's (O) description of his 'demons' being in front of him demonstrates this knew awareness and subsequent ability to 'deal with them'.

It brings things to the surface and it did take some demons; instead of following me around, looking over my shoulder, they are there in front of you, you can see them, you can confront them and deal with them. (Darren - O)

Darren (O) also recognised his sexual deviancy as something that he had to deal with himself and thus his perceived power to desist is very important.

I knew that I had to deal with my sexuality myself... So I focused all my energies on controlling the thoughts and shutting out inappropriate thoughts. (Darren - O)

Darren (O) used journaling to become more self-aware and hold himself accountable. He has also made himself accountable to his wife.

After every session I went back and I record my thoughts and impressions and moods in a journal... so within a short time I was able to cope with expressing my ideas and thoughts... when I leave prison I shall continue that process... If I record my impressions, ideas, thoughts er if I tend to have inappropriate thoughts even if I can control them, I will record that. I can use that, because I can look back and monitor my process, progress should I say. (Darren - O)

Unlike Darren (O), the offenders who perceived themselves to be powerless to desist were reliant on others to ensure their desistence; for example, John (O) said that the best option for him was to stay in prison, whilst Glen (O) projected the responsibility onto parents of potential victims to keep them away from him.

### **6.3 Cost-benefit analysis**

This cost benefit-analysis is from the offenders' perspective and thus relates to the cost and potential risk of getting caught and also the perceived benefits to them of committing their offences. The subordinate theme considers the *offenders' self-focus*, offenders *testing the victim*, the offenders' view that they *could, so did* and



finally the reduction of offenders' risk of being caught through *compartmentalisation*.

### **6.3.1 Offenders' self-focus**

The offenders clearly stated that they were more concerned about themselves than others and as such were more interested in satisfying their own desires.

All paedophiles are 'take, take, take'. (Dan - O)

There is little or no consideration of the consequences of impact of their actions.

I saw it, I wanted it, I'm having it and that's it. (Glen - O)

Offenders do not register the cost to the victim. The offenders were generally much more self-focused on their own suffering and how their offending affected them rather than being aware of their victims' suffering, particularly the victims' long term suffering and the lasting effects of the abuse. John (O) couldn't understand 'Why should [he] have to suffer?'

Glen (O) felt that by confessing his conscience would be clear; he showed little concern for the impact on his victim except by saying that he (Glen - O) was available if his nephew [victim] ever wanted to talk to him, because he didn't want his nephew to keep his abuse bottled up like he (Glen - O) had. But Glen (O) failed to acknowledge that he caused his nephew's suffering. His main focus was always that his conscience was clear and how his previous non-disclosure caused 'all-sorts of depression'.

It [confessing his crime] gave me the opportunity to say (pause) this is what I have done and to clear my conscience. (Glen - O)

There was a sense of finality about the offenders crimes, so that once they had been punished that was it; it was finished.

No matter what anyone does to me they'll never break my spirit, even if I have done wrong I am being punished for it. After that leave me alone.

(John - O)

The cost to the offender is minimal if there is a low risk of disclosure and their conscience is clear.

### 6.3.2 Testing the victim

The offenders had to trust their victim(s) not to disclose. Joe (O) pointed out that '[he] was trusting him [victim] to keep his mouth shut'. Gaining trust and feeling comfortable directly impacted on whom they selected as their victim. Glen (O) revealed the importance of this to his abusers selection of a victim - victims who were generally quieter and not too close to their family were potential targets.

But he will go for the one that he thinks he can get away with... Probably which one he felt more comfortable with and which one he could trust and which one's more likely to keep his mouth shut – this is our little secret, you say nothing. (Glen - O)

Glen (O) also explained that this was a factor in his victim selection.

He [youngest sister's son] was perfectly safe because he had too much of a big mouth on him; as far as I was concerned too close to his family, to his parents, far too close, so maybe I was looking at Peter [nephew/victim] as being vulnerable like I was; the home he came from - the same home I came from. (Glen - O)

In addition, Glen (O) found out retrospectively that his abuser had also tested his brother's response to his tactics. So there appeared to be a certain amount of testing the potential victims to see who was responsive to attention and gifts and who could be trusted not to disclose. This was also evident in the example below.

They described this [victim] one of them, because they have got three girls, as someone who was quite needy. She liked to be told that she was loved all the time and she liked to be involved in everything all the time; she wasn't very independent - she was quite a needy character. Her two sisters, the older one was very tom-boy you know in to everything all the time, out at clubs every night, netball or you know different things that she did at school; the younger one was a very similar character to the older one, and then there was the middle one that was yeah a needy character, who liked attention... she was pin-pointed, because we were trying to figure out why this uncle actually swooped for her rather than the other two and she was the one that liked to do, I think he had tried to buy the other one sweets or something at one stage, she wasn't interested – 'no I don't want to do that, I want to see my friend'. (Eve - PO)

The offender tested the girls' responsiveness and subsequently 'swooped' for one in particular. The word 'swooped' conjured up an image of a bird of prey swooping in

to capture their prey; birds of prey and child sex offenders similarly are most likely to choose the target that is less able to protect it's self and fight back. Joe explained that if his victim had responded differently and in his view shown some resistance then he would have been more wary and possibly chosen a different victim.

If he had said oh I'm not getting in to bed with you or something like that I would have thought u-oh this is this could be considerably dangerous. (Joe - O)

Offenders tested potential victims' vulnerability and they targeted both natural vulnerabilities such as a child's quiet nature and desire for attention and also the situational factors that increase children's vulnerability (see superordinate theme vulnerability for a discussion of this).

### **6.3.3 Could, so did**

The knowledge that the offender was able to abuse their victim(s), and get away with it, was part of the reason why they did and particularly why they repeated the abuse.

I am ashamed to say to it, I think I did it because I knew I could, that was as much a trigger to me as anything. (Gary - O)

Furthermore non-disclosure reinforced this and allowed the abusers to reoffend. Whilst Gary (O) and Dan (O) made this point very explicitly it can also be inferred from the other accounts too.

She never told, so I did it again, and she never told and I did it again and she never told. (Dan- O)

Similarly, John demonstrated his thought process quite clearly and that was that there was no reason to stop.

I did it three times and this is what I am thinking 'I am getting away with it every time, why stop?' (John- O)

### **6.3.4 Compartmentalisation**

One of the offenders identified compartmentalisation of his life as the reason why his offences went undetected for so long.

How I survived, as long as I did, was the very fact that I had all these different compartments and so never seeing Martin wandering round the club with me or me looking to see where Martin was. (Joe - O)

He kept his abusive behaviour very separate from his everyday life.

People watch what everybody else is up to, so this is why I was always very careful... so I left him to do what he was doing during the day, I just carried on with my usual thing. (Joe - O)

During the week when Joe (O) was at work he never thought about his weekend activities at the nudist club and vice versa. Furthermore, at the weekend when he was at the nudist club, during the day when he was busy with the running of the club he gave no thought to his abusive night time activities. Joe (O) said 'it's like (pause) changing in to Frankenstein at night' (Joe - O). He also said that waking up in the morning was like another compartment opening and it was time to get breakfast and get on with the day ahead.

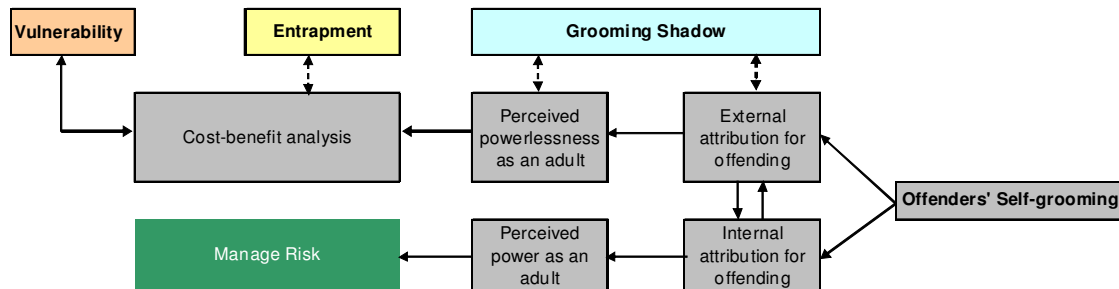
The other interviewees did not talk about this in such clear terms, but it can be inferred from one of the survivors who described his abuser as 'Jekyll and Hyde' and emphasised his different character in different situations, which served to lower the risk of disclosure. One of the police officers also used this description of offenders.

It was really like Jekyll and Hyde he was Mr Charming and then he wasn't and then he was Mr Charming again. (Jack - S)

## **Summary**

This superordinate theme described offenders' self-grooming (see Figure 2, overleaf, for a pictorial representation of this theme). External attribution for their offending was a significant part of their self-grooming and appeared to be used to justify their abusive behaviour to themselves. All of the offenders used external attribution at the time of their offences, even though one of them had internalised that he was a 'paedophile' and believed he should do it to the best of his ability. This offender still appeared to need to justify his behaviour to himself, which highlights the protective nature of external attribution. Unlike the negative effect of internal attribution mentioned above, internal attribution, which was facilitated by the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP), had a positive effect on two offenders as they took responsibility for their offending. The factor that appeared to differentiate between this negative and positive effect was the offenders' perceived power or powerlessness to desist. Internal attribution had a positive effect when it was associated with a perceived power to desist. Perceived powerlessness to desist had a negative effect and whilst it was generally associated with offenders' external

attributions when internal attribution was combined with a perceived powerlessness to desist, as in the example given above, it had a particularly negative effect because the offenders response was that he decided he was what he was and so there was no point fighting his 'fate'. There was also a cost-benefit analysis that weighed up the potential benefit to the offender and the potential risk of getting caught. This analysis affected who offenders targeted, which links very much to the previous theme and the level of an individual's vulnerability, because offenders chose potential victims who they believed would not disclose and thus would be entrapped in a cycle of abuse, which is discussed in much more detail in the following theme.



**Figure 2 - Offenders' Self-grooming**

## Chapter 7 - Entrapment

This chapter presents the findings for the superordinate theme entrapment. Joe (O) provided a very good illustration of entrapment. He conveyed how much he enjoyed his role as chairman at the nudist club he said ‘I enjoyed being at the centre like a little spider, pulling all the...’ he cut off at that point but presumably he was referring to pulling the strings and thus alludes to the authority and control he had. However, reference to being a spider represents his offending pattern rather well because he put in a lot of work in to building the club up from nothing, giving a lot of time, energy and funds to its development and then he met his victim through one of the families attending the club; this seems very akin to a spider spinning a web in order to trap their prey. Similarly, Paul (S) said ‘I just fell in to the trap’. This theme looks at how and why entrapment was successful in the experiences of the interviewees. There were four subordinate themes, which were the victims’ *perceived power*, *attribution for victimisation*, *cost-benefit analysis* and *awareness*. See Table 7 below for an overview of this theme.

**Table 7 - Superordinate theme entrapment**

<b>Entrapment</b>	<b>Perceived power</b>	Perceived powerlessness as victim
		Perceived power as a victim
	<b>Attribution for victimisation</b>	External attribution
		Internal attribution
	<b>Cost-benefit analysis</b>	Pleasure inducing factors
		Fear inducing factors
	<b>Awareness</b>	Awareness – A double edged sword

### 7.1 Perceived power

The survivors and victim-offenders seemed to report different levels of perceived power as victims of abuse. Their accounts reflected a *perceived powerlessness as a victim* and a *perceived power as a victim*. In general, the survivors were more aware of their powerlessness as a victim and the victim-offenders perceived themselves to have had power as a victim.

#### 7.1.1 Perceived powerlessness as a victim

Powerlessness as a victim was very explicit in the survivors’ accounts. Rachel (S) recognised the vulnerability of being an innocent child.

Obviously when you are an innocent, vulnerable child you just; a lot of times I'd get knocked out as well. (Rachel - S)

It seemed very important to the survivors to convey their feelings of powerlessness to the researcher. The use of violence by the abuser demonstrated one element of the survivor's powerlessness; for example, Rachel (S) expressed her powerlessness in highlighting her abuser's use of drugs and as well as violence.

He [stepfather] used to feed me drugs and give me drugs, and I didn't even know what I was taking half the time, so most of the time I was drugged up when this [sexual abuse] was happening, goodness only knows [laugh]. I wasn't in control of anything really. (Rachel - S)

Jack (S) demonstrated his perceived powerlessness as a process, which eventually involved his resignation to the abuse for as long as it would last.

My understanding is that the first time I fought, the second time I fought and third time he just came and picked me up, I knew that's how it was gonna go for however long he was gonna be down (Jack - S)

The power and status of Jack's (S) abuser imposed a sense of omnipotence, and thus powerlessness, so the Priest could do what he wanted.

There was a threat process in it all; you can't tell coz I can do what I want sort of thing. (Jack - S)

The definitive point in Jack's (S) experience that epitomised his perceived powerlessness was when his parents, in his opinion, ignored his seemingly obvious abuse at the hand of a priest (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme role of caregivers for further discussion). Jack's (S) perceived powerlessness caused him to seek safety through dissociation.

Caroline (S) wrote a poem, which expressed her sense of perceived powerlessness.

Cries in a deep place, a well; can't scramble out, oh hell; probably die here, I fear; out of the danger, can't steer. (Caroline - S)

This demonstrates her powerlessness to escape from the situation. It appears to describe her powerlessness currently and at the time of the abuse, because the struggle to steer out of danger continues (see superordinate theme grooming shadow for further discussion of continued effects). Caroline's (S) search for safety as a victim was to be alone and escape into her 'farm yard', but unfortunately this also

increased her powerlessness regarding the abuse because it gave the offender more opportunity to abuse her.

At first I used to like being in the bedroom 'cause a bit of escapism. I remember I'd be so happy to be sat there on my own playing with my farm yard, escaping in to the farm yard, but he'd come in, then I didn't, but I still loved my farm yard, because I could still kind of escape - still kind of somehow escape in to that - but urm I hated the fucking bedroom because that is where I would get shoved off. (Caroline - S)

All of the survivors, apart from Jack (S), also suffered violence at the hands of their non-sexually abusive carer or parent. In addition to this physical powerlessness, the consequence of this was that they felt they had no one to disclose to, especially if their abuser was a family member.

I couldn't have gone to my mother. (Susan - S)

This was also true for Jack (S) because of the authority of the Catholic Church in his family (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme personal level and role of caregiver under responsibility).

Who can I talk to about this and let alone trying to talk to my family or anything, I was talking about a Priest. (Jack - S)

The survivors' powerlessness was reinforced when their disclosures were met with denial and rebuke. Caroline (S) was reprimanded for her suggestion of abuse.

I'll tell my mum that you made me pregnant, she [mother] came running out, my friend heard it all she was their stood at the door, and she [mother] said what did you just say, and I couldn't say it again (laugh) I couldn't say it again, she [mother] I just looked at her in the hope, so I looked at him [abuser] and I said you tell my mum what I just said, I can't remember what he [abuser] said, he [abuser] obviously didn't say I've been abusing her, and I remember she [mother] smacked me as well, and she [mother] said don't let me catch you ever saying anything like that again, so I didn't. (Caroline - S)

Similarly, Rachel's (S) disclosure was disregarded and, in Rachel's (S) opinion, her brother's lies were believed over and above her truth.

Again after that he'd [brother] admitted that he'd lied about it [the abuse], so his [brother's] lies were very powerful and the fact that he was believed and we were telling the truth and we were never believed. (Rachel - S)



Powerlessness did not feature predominantly in the victim-offenders' accounts of their childhood sexual abuse. However, Glen (O) did refer to his powerlessness briefly, but it seemed to be a retrospective attempt to justify his powerlessness to himself, as well as to his father, but he was much more inclined to relay that he had power as a victim (see below). On the other hand, Gary (O) seemed to have accepted his powerlessness as a victim, but he may have only accepted this retrospectively as part of his recovery and the SOTP; in Gary's (O) descriptions of his parents (his abusers) he made repeated references to his and his mother's size compared to his father (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme inherited power and status of offenders for further discussion). Furthermore, Gary's (O) description of himself as his father's 'servant', which was quickly changed to 'slave' provides an illustration of his perceived powerlessness because as a servant there is still an element of choice about serving or not; as a slave, however, there is no such privilege to choose. Gary's (O) later recognition of his powerlessness as a victim may be related to his perceived power as a victim (see the next section for discussion of this).

### **7.1.2 Perceived power as a victim**

The offenders concentrated much more on their compliance, as opposed to their powerlessness, which they interpreted as having agency and power as a victim; for example, Darren (O) felt 'saddled with the guilt, all [his] life, [because] of having prostituted himself', which focuses on his apparent choice rather than his powerlessness in those circumstances. John's (O) account also identified him as supposedly having made a choice that sexual abuse was better than the persistent rejection and violence he suffered at home, he commented that the sexual abuse offered some 'pleasure from the pain'. Similarly, Dan (O) said he 'accepted it, because [he] was looking for it because [he] had no love at home'; this acceptance again suggested some element of agency on behalf of the child. The involuntary response of the body to sexual stimulation was further interpreted by a number of the victim-offenders (e.g. Glen, Dan, and John) and one of the survivors (Paul) as evidence that they wanted the sexual contact to happen.

Because of the enjoyment I had, because I thought that I was gay. (Paul – O)

Paul (S), unlike the other survivors, perceived that he had power as a victim; he said, 'I always wanted to go round there'. Paul (S) recalled that he was intrigued and felt like he was willing. He perceived that he could not be controlled, which in turn confirmed his perceived power as a victim.

I always think that he wasn't grooming me like I can't be controlled like that.  
(Paul – S)

He also perceived that he had a choice.

As an 8 year old boy I didn't have a choice to say no, that is really hard to say when I really did have that choice didn't I; I could have spoke out if I wanted to. (Paul - S)

Perceived power as a victim appeared to enforce the victim's entrapment because it was almost like they had become an accomplice to their own abuse.

Perceived power and powerlessness as a victim was not strictly a mutually exclusive dichotomy, because the survivors particularly shared accounts of their perceived power outside of the abusive situation, particularly as they sought safety; their search for safety was not synonymous with disclosure, but rather seeking temporary sanctuary or reprise from their suffering. Survivors sought safety by controlling aspects of their lives that they were able to; Susan (S) and Paul (S) each found their safety by becoming a bully at school and positioning themselves at the top of the social hierarchy. By becoming a bully, they had power and status, and were much less likely to be victimised.

When I was at home I became a bully then, I became horrible to people, my peers you know, very aggressive, very angry, very nasty, when I look back on it. But urr I had some good friends, but they were only my friends because I was tough and they were behind me. (Susan - S)

Susan (S) perceived herself as a strong person and she made comparisons to others to demonstrate this strength.

I used to fight for my brother, because he was the weak one. (Susan - S)

Rachel (S) found sanctuary at school and she enjoyed school because she felt safe there.

They [teachers] could have mistaken me as happy, because when I was out at school I was happy, on the basis I was happy to be away from home, and

happy coz I was in an environment that I trusted and I felt safe and you know I liked it, and I was valuable and the teacher gives praise and encourages you and stuff. (Rachel - S)

She sought out other such environments that offered her safety, so she also arranged to stay at other people's houses wherever possible and thus took active steps to protect herself.

Yeah so in that respect I learnt to protect myself from a quite an early age, in that I never was at home, I took myself away from the environment as soon as I could (laugh). (Rachel - S)

She also came to realise that she may be able to prevent the abuse if there were other people in the house, for example the doctor. Thus, she used to pretend to be ill in the hope that her abuser would leave her alone.

But again you have to understand that because I knew the bedtime routine, and stuff like that, if I pretended I was ill that actually he may leave me alone anyway. (Rachel - S)

Furthermore, she used to plan her revenge for when she grew up. She plotted how she would be a police officer and she would come and arrest her step-father.

Unlike the other offenders, Gary was the only offender who described using his perceived power to make his environment safer (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme awareness and vigilance due to risk of harm). Some elements of the survivors and Gary's (O) search for safety are reflected later in the superordinate theme grooming shadow (see subordinate theme perceived power under grooming shadow below).

## **7.2 Attribution for victimisation**

This theme refers to survivors and victim-offenders attribution for their victimisation. An individual's attribution for their victimisation is largely dependent on their construction of their vulnerability and subsequent cause of their abuse. The subordinate themes are *internal attribution* and *external attribution*. Two out of the five survivors externalised and all of the victim-offenders and the remaining two of survivors predominantly internalised the cause of their victimisation. The difference between those that externally attributed and those that internally attributed was not the identification of factors that increased their vulnerability *per se* but whether they

attributed these as the cause of their abuse or if they internally attributed that the cause was something internal to them. See the superordinate theme grooming shadow and subordinate theme search for understanding, which discusses the survivors and victim-offenders attribution for their victimisation, which was often related to how individuals had attributed the cause of their abuse at the time, but can change through a process of searching for understanding.

### **7.2.1 Internal attribution**

A victim's entrapment is further enforced by confusion or misunderstanding about the cause of their abuse; this appears to be affected by the messages received from others, both the offender and significant adults. If the messages from abusive others are internally attributed as indicating the truth about a person's identity they are likely to affect the individuals' interpretation of an abusive situation.

Offenders attempted to make their victims feel responsible for their own abuse, which had two elements. Firstly shifting the responsibility for the abuse to the victim and convincing them that they had consented. For example, Glen (O) 'always said to him [the victim] you don't have to do anything you don't want to do', with the effect that compliance equals consent. Here the offenders have given the impression that a victim has a choice, but of course they do not because of all the other factors that come in to play (see remainder of superordinate theme entrapment).

Secondly, the offenders often shifted the responsibility for protecting the offender and significant others to child. Most offenders abuse children that they know and have a relationship with, either naturally occurring or specifically formed for abusive purposes; this relationship increases the likelihood that the victim will want to protect the offender.

Towards the end of the abuse erm I was saying Becky please don't tell anybody about this or I will go to prison for a very long time, so I was then beginning to justify myself, put up these barriers and add to her anxieties by saying to her you know, not only am I abusing you, but I'm telling you to protect me as well. (Gary - O)

Some victims genuinely believe that it is their fault and therefore that they are responsible for protecting the offender and also other loved ones like in the example below.

My mum is really happy with this person; I don't want to ruin it again; she was really wrecked the last time round; it's all my fault. That's the thing the abusers say is that it is you fault, this is down to you, you have caused this to happen. (Barry - PO)

This is likely to cause confusion because, on the one hand, they want the abuse to stop but, on the other, they care greatly for the offender and their significant others and they do not want them or anyone else to get hurt.

Gary (O) provided an example of how powerful this shift of responsibility can be in entrapping a victim. The exclusivity of Gary (O) and his victim's relationship meant that his victim felt like she was the only person that could meet his needs and thus felt a responsibility for him, so when she noticed his low mood and that he had withdraw his attention from her, she sought to engage him in the way she had been taught.

She had got to the stage, by this time, where she thought the only way she could please me was by acting sexually towards me. (Gary – O)

Another demonstration of the significant affect of the internalisation of the messages from abusive adults is given by John (O) and Caroline (S), who present clear examples of this in practice because how they spoke about themselves and their identity started to reflect the negative messages that they were surrounded by.

I were a devil's child; I thought, you'll always be a bad 'ne. (John - O)

I was always the naughty one then; I had got the label 'naughty little girl' (Caroline - S)

An individual's perceived power, as discussed above, impacts on their attribution, because if they perceive that they had agency and responsibility for the abuse they seemed more likely to internalise the cause of their abuse to themselves. Paul considered himself to be a willing participant with detrimental effects on his identity. He tried to mediate this effect by trying to get other boys to go to his abusers house and to ultimately be involved in order to check that his abuse was normal.

I was trying to get other boys involved so that I didn't feel different or feel left out or to make sure that it was normal. (Paul – S)

However, the local boys did not want to go and because his abuser seemingly fulfilled many of his unmet needs for attention and affection he continued to go. The consequence of Paul's (S) confusion was confusion over his sexuality (see superordinate theme grooming shadow and subordinate theme search for understanding and internal attribution).

Barry, one of the police officers, drew a comparison between child sexual abuse and domestic violence. He goes on to explain the similar consequence of internal attribution in domestic violence.

It is like domestic violence, isn't it, the common feature of domestic violence is one whereby the perpetrator tells the survivor or the victim or whatever you want to call them, tells them that you are worthless, nobody will believe you, you need me, they will believe me, you are worthless, nobody will believe you. And that message repeated on a daily basis, and eventually that person is beaten down to a level where they do think that they are worthless and that nobody will believe them, and we know that because they tell us every time they come in and relate domestic violence. (Barry - PO)

It is also important to consider that whilst the actions of the offender and other significant adults were influential in shifting the responsibility to the victim, it is also possible that they simply internally attributed the cause of their abuse in the absence of an alternative explanation or someone to help them understand the truth that the offender is responsible and that they are innocent.

### **7.2.2 External attribution**

External attribution relates to how individuals construct their vulnerability and hence attribute the cause of their abuse. External attribution is when the cause of the abuse is assigned to factors outside of the victim. See superordinate theme vulnerability for discussion of the construction of vulnerability. Susan (S), Rachel (S) and Jack (S) externally attributed the cause of their victimisation and primarily pointed at the role of their caregivers as responsible for the construction of their vulnerability. Furthermore, they were very certain that this was the cause of their abuse as opposed

to there being something wrong with them. External attribution also included justifying the offender's behaviour.

He [stepfather] had been drinking so he raped me. (Susan - S)

This was functional because it meant she did not internalise the cause. External attribution appeared to facilitate the best recovery.

### **7.3 Cost-benefit analysis**

The offenders used both *pleasure inducing factors* and *fear inducing factors* to entrap their victim(s) with the intention of making them not want to disclose. Furthermore, a child's cost-benefit analysis was not only based on the actions of the offender but was also strongly influenced by the actions of family members and relatives also. Surprisingly, the general consensus from the survivors and victim-offenders was that sexual abuse was reported to be not as bad as the physical and mental abuse they experienced, relatively speaking. It appeared that pleasure-inducing factors reinforced entrapment by increasing the victims' perceived power and responsibility for their abuse<sup>1</sup>, whilst the fear inducing factors reinforced the victims' perceived powerlessness.

#### **7.3.1 Pleasure-inducing factors**

Offenders' targeted victims unmet needs, both emotional and material, and entrapped them in an abusive cycle by fulfilling these voids. Please see superordinate theme vulnerability above, which considered how children's vulnerability exists at many different levels and is influenced by many different factors, including unmet needs. The victim's unmet needs were met through the giving of gifts, money and privileges, so called love and attention, sanctuary from adverse home experiences, power through having a secret or being associated with the status of the offender. Examples of how these were used to entrap victims are presented below.

John's (O) strategy involved giving his victim and her siblings' money; he spoke about them as a commodity that he consequently had 'bought'.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not refer to the positive perception of power, which was used to seek safety.

Me being crafty me I gave them all 50 pence each to go and get a treat for themselves. They're in love with me then, that's it – bought them. (John - O)

The use of money in entrapping victims was not just about meeting needs but also satisfying desires. Children tend to want instant gratification and the gift of money gets them something that they want, especially if there is not usually much money available for treats. Evidence for the power of this strategy to entrap a victim is demonstrated in the fact that John's (O) victim sought out the treats that John (O) plied her with.

Sarah [victim] came running up oohh John, John, John 'can I have 50p?' So it's automatic oh I have bought you haven't I, you are mine, you know, so I have attacked her a third time. (John - O)

One of the police officers described this approach in a slightly different way, describing the offender as the 'honey pot' and so illustrating the attraction presented by offenders and the cost-benefit analysis made by the victims.

He [the offender] was accepted as the 'honey pot' and rightly or wrongly he is giving cigarettes to [them], but they are of the nature of taking them because they are youngsters, they are immature, there is a sugar daddy or somebody looking after them...So what if we have to see him naked or you know masturbate him off occasionally, because for them it was a means to an end of getting their booze, their cigarettes. (Steve - PO)

Furthermore, according to one of the police officers, victims appear to weigh up the benefits offered against the cost, and the example he used was that the cost of seeing the offender naked and masturbating him occasionally was worth the sacrifice.

There was two girls within that group that were 'you are not telling anyone' we are having too much of a good time. Yes we have to do nasty, unpleasant things, but it is a bit of a laugh. (Steve - PO)

Glen's (O) abuser was also a source of privileges that he did not want to lose. Glen (O) made it very clear that his abuser was a good person to know because he was good at bricklaying and decorating and such like. He also had an allotment and Glen (O) was very keen on gardening, in fact he said it was the only thing that he was good at, and he used to help out. The power of the entrapment between Glen (O) and his abuser was demonstrated by the continuation of this 'so called' relationship until after Glen's (O) nineteenth birthday. Glen (O) reported that even after this



point he would visit his cousin and if he had just had a shower he would massage oils in to him and masturbate him, but his cousin would never reciprocate. Glen (O) said that he also enjoyed the freedom of being able to be naked at his cousin's house. Glen (O) was so entrapped in this cycle that he even defended his cousin and lied for him when his cousin nearly got caught during an abusive incident.

The cigarettes and money that Susan's stepfather gave her entrapped her in a cycle of abuse, not specifically because of the objects themselves but rather, because of the power and status they afforded her.

Well I never had any money or anything because I wasn't worthy of anything, and I suppose I enjoyed that sort of having the fags and going to school with a pack of 10 fags and money in the pocket where other kids my age didn't have it, you know. (Susan - S)

At home Susan (S) was at the bottom of the social hierarchy, but because of these gifts, at school she was at the top because of the inherited power and status achieved through possession of money and cigarettes. He also treated Susan (S) as if she was worth something i.e. equal to her half-sister, unlike her mother who favoured her half-sister. Furthermore, many of the victims were entrapped by their confused feelings and their love for the abuser especially where the offender was a relative; the victims often reported not wanting to lose the affection that the offender gave them, particularly when they didn't get it from anyone else.

There were some things about him I did love, and he was always there to protect me from the outside world. (Susan - S)

Gaining power proved to be significant in other cases too. Joe (O) was the chairman of a nudist club and so was deemed to be very important. Joe (O) felt that his victim might have had a perceived sense of power through association with him.

So he probably felt that he was sort of in, and knew things that were going on within the club that other people didn't know... It gave them probably some enhancement within the club to be friends with the boss. (Joe - O)

Similarly, Glen (O) enjoyed a sense of power because he had a secret from his dad.

I had a secret from me dad (laugh)... I quite liked having a secret from me dad. (Glen - O)

All the survivors, bar one, and all of the victim-offenders who gave an account of their experiences of child sexual abuse commonly reported being in need of love and attention as a result of their coexisting violent and emotionally abusive home lives (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme role of caregivers for further discussion). All children need to be loved; consequently, they were vulnerable to the offenders' approaches. Dan (O) gave this as the reason for him being entrapped by his primary school teacher's 'so-called' affection.

I was shown a lot of love and affection from the teacher there (primary school). She had me sitting on her lap, she'd have me, she'd be cuddling me, kissing me and things like that and I probably because I accepted it, because I was looking for it because I had no love at home at all... if you look back on it it's kind of a beginning of an abusive relationship... she put her, she, you put your hand on her leg and she would rub it up and down. (Dan - O)

Darren's (O), Joe's (O) and Glen's (O) respective victims had a volatile home life and found some kind of sanctuary with their respective abusers. Darren's (O) victim was a neighbour and she spent a lot of time with Darren's (O) wife because it was calmer and quieter than at home, and she enjoyed playing with the cat. Joe's (O) victim found sanctuary at Joe's (O) caravan when he was staying at the nudist club at the weekends, because he seemed to be the odd one out in his family and his parents argued quite a lot. Glen (O) abused his nephew, who experienced the same sort of upbringing as Glen (O), which was violent the same as Glen's (O) childhood had been, because Glen's (O) parents were his nephew's guardians.

Gary's (O) victim did not experience a violent home life. Her emotional needs arose because her father died when she was very young and according to Gary (O) her mother was not very maternal and instead treated her children more like siblings. She became close to Gary (O) and him to her; they developed a rather exclusive relationship, which gradually progressed to be sexual. She became so entrapped in this cycle that when Gary (O) tried to distance himself from her, because he had scared himself by going 'too far', this withdrawal of attention served to strengthen her entrapment. Furthermore, she attempted to regain his attention in the way she had been taught – sexually.

Similarly, Glen (O) described how he later wanted to be sexually involved with his abuser, only to be rejected.

Later on when I started to grow up I actually wanted to be sexually involved; I wanted it, I wanted him to be with me as we were in the very beginning, but it wasn't happening, he wasn't interested, maybe I was too old for him or something. (Glen - O)

In both of these examples, the victims made an effort to regain the so-called 'affection' that they had received from their respective abusers, after they had experienced rejection, which demonstrates their entrapment. Thus, when a need was met, even though it was met inappropriately, there was then a fear of losing that affection and entrapment is reinforced because they did not want to lose the privileges or 'affection' that they received from the offender.

### **7.3.2 Fear-inducing factors**

Fear was induced through either direct violence or observing the violent potential of the abuser. For example, Rachel's (S) step-father was demeaning, affectionless and violent, which created a fear of harm and even after the abuse stopped the entrapment continued because the fear of harm remained.

I suppose I was still living in the fear that he [stepfather] would harm me if anybody found out [about the abuse]. (Rachel - S)

Susan (S) also described her fear of harm because she stated that she knew what her step-father was capable of. She reported that others called her step-father a 'loveable rogue'. Whilst everyone seemed to love Susan's (S) stepfather, she believed that this was through fear, because people knew what he was capable of, as did Susan (S).

But there was the violence there and I knew what my dad was and what he could have done (Susan - S)

Furthermore, Jack (S) illustrated his fear of harm when he described his abuser as being like 'Jekyll and Hyde', who had two very different characters – one good and one evil.

Not every abuser was violent but every victim was exposed to violence in some way because there was also a fear of violence and harm from people other than the offenders. This served to maintain the offenders control over the victim because of the victims' fear of disclosure and response from others. Glen (O) feared the

consequences of disclosing and his father's response because he believed that he would respond violently, as he usually did, and blame him for the abuse.

It would have been down to me – dirty this, dirty that, dirty the other – why did you let it happen? ...How am I supposed to defend myself against a grown man? I am shy; I couldn't say boo to a goose and he's saying it's my fault, how can it be... but that is what my dad didn't understand. I was more frightened of him than I was of my abuser. (Glen - O)

Glen's (O) father did not know about the abuse and thus could not have blamed Glen (O) for his abuse; despite this, Glen (O) stated that his father blamed him for the abuse. This goes to show the reality of his fear of disclosure and his father's response. Paul (S) also reported being more frightened of his father's potential response to his disclosure than being frightened of his abuser, because his father was very violent and treated him like a 'dog', and his father did not value animals very highly. He also said that his abuser knew that his father was violent and that Paul was scared of him. Similarly, Glen (O) recognised that his victim, who was his nephew, was brought up by Glen's (O) parents and as such Glen (O) expected his victim to have a similar fear that he had.

Maybe my dad would have hit him the same way that he would have hit me.  
(Glen - O)

Susan (S) and Darren's (O) experiences of persistent violence from their respective mothers are also a good example of how fear from others can entrap victims in a cycle of abuse. Counter-intuitively Susan's (S) abuser was also her protector from her mother's violence. Therefore, it was evident that the fear that entrapped the victims was not only that initiated by the offender but also the fear caused by non-sexually abusing parents, which is then capitalised on by the offender (see sub-theme role of caregivers within the master theme vulnerability).

The fear of violence was not necessarily violence towards the victim; it may have been fear of violence or harm to a loved one. Dan (O) explained that he was aware of the effect that his threats towards his victim's grandparents would have.

She [daughter/victim] said that I would kill her Nan (pause), now I wouldn't have said that to her, because I knew her response... but obviously (pause) I have been heard to say that 'fucking arseholes if I had the chance I would get rid of them', or go and kick their head in or do something like that, you know

to my wife when we had been arguing. So I can't say I have never ever said it in front of her, but I have never ever told her that. (Dan - O)

Susan (S) and Rachel (S) talked about having a strong attachment with their younger siblings and thus feeling a responsibility and a duty to protect them.

I got the worst end of things [physical abuse] because I used to stand in front of them and stop it and you know, take the blame. (Rachel - S)

Susan (S) was specifically concerned that a disclosure would lead to her siblings being taken in to care. She had been in care, where she had experienced physical abuse, and she didn't want her siblings to suffer this. Furthermore, Susan (S) was able to try and protect her siblings whilst they were with her, but if they were taken into care then this would be out of her control. Her disclosure would have changed everything.

I really just wanted to protect him, and I knew that if anything like that had come out then it would have all been over (Susan - S)

The police officers also reported this fear of disclosure as influential in a child's entrapment.

The fact that they are frightened, the fact that they don't want to ruin the family life and environment, the fact that all these things are they know that this is wrong, that it is not right and it shouldn't be happening, but for all those different reasons they don't make that disclosure, and those are the things that these people [offenders] are adapt at making sure they are in their head. (Barry – PO)

A fear of the consequences of disclosure results in avoidance of disclosure. The last line of this quote again emphasises the cognitive component of grooming, which enables a sustained control over the victim. Offenders instil a sense of fear in their victims to prevent the child from disclosing; a fear of the consequences of disclosure may be achieved through threats of violence, loss of affection or privileges, fear of not being believed, which is reinforced through, and because of, the power and authority of the offender.

A lot of victims do feel that no one is going to believe them, particularly if it is a family member; you know it is easier to believe that a stranger would abuse your child than you know your own flesh and blood. (Jane - PO)

Victims appear to have made a cost benefit analysis between physical abuse and sexual abuse. Surprisingly sexual abuse was preferential to physical abuse for significant number of victims, who also experienced persistent physical and emotional abuse.

Because instead of getting smacked and hit and beaten with me grandma and me uncles, this were like a pleasure from the pain. I know it was horrible what they were doing to me but I'd sooner have that kind of pain than the other kind of pain. (John - O)

Darren (O) lived with a neighbour from about the age of 8 because of his mother's violence towards him having chosen to put up with his neighbour's sexual abuse rather than his mother's violence.

Unfortunately, the downside was that he urm also sexually abused me urm I didn't work it out in clear terms as a child, but I think I realised that I had a choice to make. He was not going to beat me, he was feeding me and clothing me better than my mother had done, so I had a choice between urm violence and being sexually abused. (Darren - O)

Sexual abuse is often accompanied by some kind of benefits or privileges whereas physical abuse has no such 'positives'. Susan (S) asked the rhetorical question 'I dunno would you put up with it for that', which also indicated the power of this cost-benefit analysis.

#### **7.4 Awareness - A double-edged sword**

A child's awareness regarding their sexual abuse had a dual role on their entrapment. Naturally, if a child was not aware that what was happening was wrong then they would not make a deliberate disclosure; however, it transpired that as a victim's awareness increased this meant they were less likely to disclose. With age and maturity came awareness of the reality of their abusive experiences and an awareness of the consequences of disclosure and thus, as stated above, a reduced likelihood of disclosure. Therefore, awareness seems to act as a double-edged sword in the offenders favour. This subordinate theme presents evidence for this.

Grooming within the family is 'a way of life' (Jane – PO). If it is all a child has known they do not know any different. The survivors and the victim-offenders lacked a context in which to make sense of their sexually abusive experiences. They

ended up believing that abuse was normal (see superordinate theme vulnerability and sub-theme deviant norms) or simply being totally confused.

I couldn't quite, I couldn't get my head round what had gone on, because he was violent as well (pause) and then half an hour or whatever afterwards he dropped me off and he was at the gate talking as like nothing had happened. (Jack - S)

The offenders' accounts provided examples of how they used a child's lack of knowledge as a means of instilling deviant norms and deviant understanding, which they then used to their advantage.

I finished up getting my wife's tape measure out and for whatever reason measuring her to see how everything is growing, round her head and arms and everything and in the process under her arms and round her waist and all that sort of thing and urm I also made sure that I measured the inside of her leg and of course that brought my hand in contact with her genital area... so it wasn't a prolonged period of grooming; it was just an occasion when I took advantage of a child because I was alone with them. (Darren - O)

I said 'if you don't let me do this I'll make you pregnant'... I've just got to touch your ear - you're pregnant. (John - O)

Offenders also took advantage of the deviant norms that were already present in a child's environment (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme deviant norms).

The survivors were aware on some level, although they did not have a full understanding of what was happening.

You have a sense that this isn't right even if you don't know the full extent of it... It wasn't till I got to 13/14 I realised this wasn't, you know, this isn't right and it should not be happening. (Susan - S)

Against a backdrop of physical and emotional abuse the pleasure inducing tactics of the offenders were identified as 'a bit odd'.

Something [abusive experience] did happen then coz I remember thinking it was a bit odd; I do remember feeling it was nice because I was getting a cuddle for a change, instead of being told off and smacked. (Caroline - S)

Jack (S) demonstrates that he had some awareness about the fact that something out of the ordinary was happening when he gave an account of 'being taken to see the most absurd film for a 9-year old' (Jack - S). Rachel (S) reports planning how she would get revenge in the future, which implies that she was aware at some level that what was happening was wrong, or that she did not like it.

I remember going to my room and plotting what I was going to when I was older... I was going to be a police officer and I was going to arrest Pat [step-dad] (laugh) do you know what I mean, that's how I got through the day, it was like my revengeful thoughts, of how I'm gonna get through, and how I'm only young now but soon I'm going to be an adult and I won't be living here. (Rachel - S)

Nevertheless, understanding alone would not have resulted in a disclosure because there were other factors preventing the children from confiding in someone. In fact, as the children got older, they gained an increased awareness and understanding of the offender's power and status and the consequences of disclosure, for example how things would change after disclosure, the potential for them and their siblings to end up in care and the loss of privileges provided by the offender and the fear of harm. This awareness actually encouraged them to maintain their silence.

The effect of increased awareness on the victim-offenders' experience seemed to differ because, they tended to internally attribute the cause of their abuse, this may have compounded the effect of their internal attributions and thus reinforced their entrapment and lack of disclosure. However, it is possible that the victim-offenders internally attributed the cause of their abuse as a consequence of their later offending and associated external attribution, which thus puts the onus on the victim. It is very difficult to attribute the cause and effect of this from retrospective data.

This dual role of awareness on a victim's experience and propensity to disclose was inferred from the survivor and offender accounts, but was furthermore confirmed by the police officer's experiences of interviewing victims during their investigations. They reported that either a child blurts it out innocently, not realising that they are disclosing abuse because of lack of awareness, or something happens to trigger their disclosure. The trigger does not need to be very big; it may just be 'the straw that breaks the camels back' (Steve - PO).



It is if something pivotal happens on that day and they have had an upset sometimes or if they see that person again you know all of a sudden it comes to the surface and they disclose it basically or something upsets them on that particular day and they can't contain it any longer, or you find they just blurt it out to a friend. A lot of it is the secret aspect, you know they tell a friend 'please keep it a secret' and obviously that friend tells their mum. (Rose - PO)

Children often do not have the words to tell somebody what is happening or they simply cannot tell them. One of the cases described how the child couldn't verbally tell her mum, but she wrote it down for her. The police officers find that children are more comfortable talking to friends and strangers about what has happened rather than parents. In fact, the police found that 'the majority of children, who make disclosures, actually make disclosures to their friends' (Barry - PO).

Steve (PO) recalled how a girl of 8 or 9 spoke 'more matter of fact[ually]' about her experiences, which he attributed to her immaturity.

She was only 8 or 9 and I think that she was being more matter of fact about 'oh yes he has touched me there', because she is still that immature to really know sexually what was going to happen. (Steve - PO)

Awareness was identified as the reason why older children and young adults found the disclosure process more difficult relative to younger children.

They [young adults] can sometimes be harder to get things out of than children, because the younger ones are so sort of, they don't know what they are telling us is wrong necessarily. (Eve - PO)

An increased awareness resulted in an increased level of embarrassment and shame for the victim.

It was not something you would have bragged about, not something we would have said. (Rachel - S)

Paul (S) said 'As much as I wanted someone to find out I was scared of someone finding out as well'. One particular girl, who was interviewed by the police officers, was really embarrassed about her compliance.

She was performing certain acts on him and wasn't been made physically being made to do it, but thought that it was acceptable and that was normal, she'd do that. She was highly embarrassed in talking about it. (Eve - PO)

This embarrassment appeared to be worse if the victim perceived that they had power in the abusive situation (see perceived power as a victim above).

As a matter of course the police officers interview the victim without their parents present, because they know that this will help the child and facilitate better evidence.

Because the kid will talk one to one with you much better with nobody else in the room, especially when it comes to swearing and saying sexual words and naming parts of the body. (Dave - PO)

The presence of the child's parents tends to cause the child to feel more ashamed.

There is some sort of being ashamed to tell mummy, daddy, or family member (Steve - PO).

Parents' reactions can have a significant impact on the child.

A reaction of a mother or father hearing what their child is saying is going to have an impact, even if it is just a facial expression, and in my opinion prevent them from telling me everything as comfortably as they possibly can. (Jane - PO)

Victims are often acutely aware of the distress that their disclosure causes others, particularly non-offending parents. An awareness of non-offending parents distress, following disclosure, serves to justify what the offender told the victim.

You sometimes walk in to a house and you know you have got parents absolutely wailing and you have got this child that's sat there looking absolutely horrified thinking, you know, oh my God what have I done, should I, maybe it should have stayed a secret like the offender told them to. (Jane - PO)

This is compounded further if the child feels that they have caused the distress.

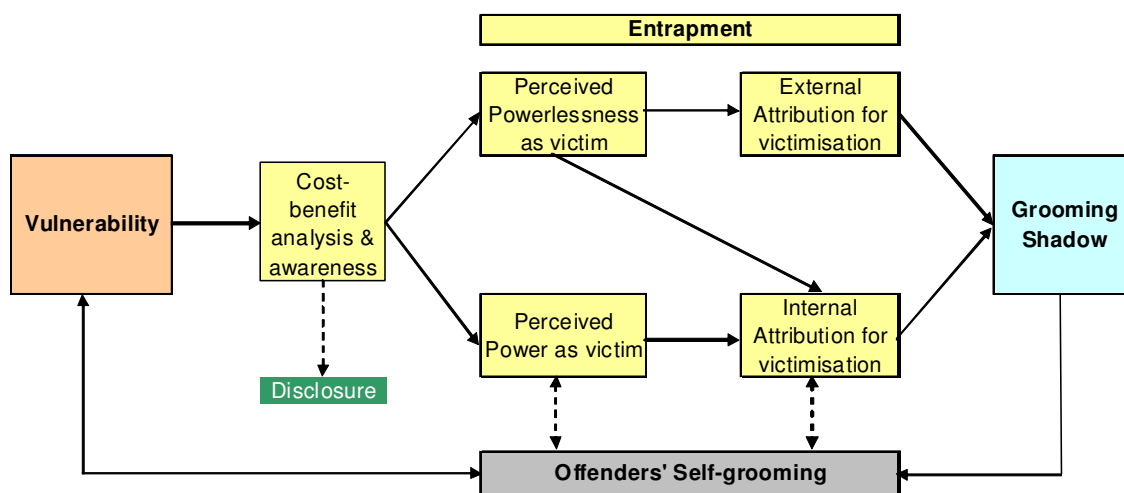
Furthermore, they internalise the cause of their parent(s)' distress to them.

We have to get in there really quickly so that the child isn't seeing 'oh my God look at how much distress', because they think that they have caused it. (Jane - PO)

Consequently, awareness of this distress is likely to strengthen their entrapment and make them less willing to give a detailed disclosure.

## Summary

This superordinate theme described victims' entrapment (see Figure 3, below, for pictorial representation). Entrapment was dependent on four subordinate themes; first, the victims' level of perceived power or powerlessness as a victim. Secondly, how they attributed the cause of the abuse to either external factors or as internal to themselves. Thirdly, the victims' cost-benefit analysis of disclosure and continued abuse, which considered the pleasure inducing factors and fear inducing factors utilised by the offenders. Finally, entrapment was reinforced by the double-edged sword of the victims' awareness, because increased awareness is necessary for a deliberate disclosure but increased awareness often led to increased embarrassment and reduced likelihood of disclosure. Each survivor and victim-offenders' entrapment occurred as a consequence of a combination of the above. There appeared to be two dominate patterns. The survivors and victim-offenders tended to be entrapped either by their perceived powerlessness, which was reinforced by external attribution of the cause of their abuse or they were entrapped by their perception that they held some power or agency within their abuse and they were more likely to internally attribute the cause of the abuse to themselves. The former pattern was more common for the survivors and the latter pattern more common for the victim-offenders, although this distinction is not clear cut with some of the survivors falling in to the latter category. The combination of these factors had a significant affect on later recovery (see superordinate theme grooming shadow for further discussion) and/or risk of offending (see superordinate theme offenders' self-grooming for further discussion).



**Figure 3 – Entrapment**

## Chapter 8 - Grooming Shadow

This chapter presents the findings for the superordinate theme grooming shadow. The grooming shadow is the continued effect and shadow of what has gone before. Glen's comment below suggests that the grooming shadow is a continuation of the abuse.

I try not to concentrate on it [memories of abuse]... because the more I feed in to that [remembering abuse], I start getting depressed and then it is like I am allowing him to abuse me again. (Glen - O)

As such, individuals' entrapment (see above) held significant consequences for later recovery and their grooming shadows. Perceived power as a victim<sup>2</sup> and internal attribution for the cause of their abuse had a more negative effect on their recovery. This negative impact appeared to be related to the offenders' use of more pleasure-inducing factors and to the offenders not using violence, because of the impact on the individuals' perceived power as a victim and internal attribution for the cause of their abuse (see Figure 1 in the discussion for a model that has been developed from this analysis). Therefore, these factors are important in survivors' and victim-offenders' recoveries.

Abuse and the grooming process result in an internal change in the victim because 'it changes that person' (Eve - PO). Jack (S) explained that life after abuse felt like having an 'infection', because abuse is the 'invasion of the intimate self'. The image of abuse leaving a victim with an 'infection' is also reflected in one of the police officer's statements - 'it eats away at people' (Eve - PO). The abuse is living inside them; the memories are alive and real. The abuse is then a part of who that person is, in as much as we are a product of our experiences; it has an effect on every aspect of life because it is still living inside the victim. Like any physical infection it requires attention and treatment before it can be healed.

Furthermore, Gary (O) talked about how his early experiences left him with a 'scar'. He is not talking about a physical scar, of which he may also have been left, but of

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<sup>2</sup> Again this is referring to the sense of responsibility for and agency within the abusive situation rather than the positive use of power to seek safety.

the psychological and emotional scar of the abuse from his mother and father, and more specifically the sexual abuse he experienced at the hands of his father and his father's drunken friends. Scar tissue takes a long-time to heal and it can also cause further complications, so this is also a good illustration of the grooming shadow.

Jack (S) suggests that evidence for the existence of a grooming shadow is provided by the number of victims that end up with mental health problems or end up in prison.

We (victims of abuse) fill up mental health hospitals; we fill up prisons; we're dysfunctional. (Jack - S)

The police officers reported that they often find that victims of historical abuse have significant difficulties in later life. Their accounts support Jack's (S) claim that victim's of abuse are over represented in the population of mental health services users and in prisons; Jane (PO) added that they 'get lots and lots of referrals from psychiatric nurses and the local hospital for people with problems'.

The continued power of grooming was demonstrated explicitly by one lady, known to the police officers; she 'had an adult relationship with her abuser' (Eve – PO). This lady was not alone because other people shared experiences of offenders that maintained the abusive relationship in the victim's adult life, for example Glen (O) continued to have a supposedly consenting relationship with his abuser well in to his twenties. Furthermore, Glen (O) continued to defend his cousin/abuser by denying the abuse had happened when his father asked him as an adult and reported that his abuser was 'alright'.

This section presents the findings relating to the superordinate theme grooming shadow. This theme incorporates three subordinate themes, which are *search for understanding*, *perceived power as an adult* and *acknowledgement*. See Table 8 for an overview of this theme.

**Table 8 - Superordinate theme grooming shadow**

<b>Grooming Shadow</b>	<b>Search for understanding</b>	Internal attribution for victimisation
		External attribution for victimisation
	<b>Perceived power</b>	Perceived powerlessness as an adult <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Powerlessness</li> <li>• Worthlessness</li> <li>• Loudness as a defence</li> <li>• Escapism</li> <li>• Be alone</li> </ul>
		Perceived power as an adult <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control</li> </ul>
	<b>Acknowledgement</b>	To be no longer invisible

### 8.1 Search for understanding

A search for understanding was portrayed as a means of recovery because it was important for survivors to understand that there was a ‘peculiar logic’ to their lives.

At least I know what I am talking about, I understand now, and that was my big thing. I only ever wanted to understand what had gone on in my life and now I understand I can (pause) it is understandably there is peculiar logic to my life and that has given me the opportunity to have some peace with myself. (Jack - S)

The extent of recovery and respective grooming shadow, as discussed above, was to a large extent dependent on this search for understanding and consequent construction of their vulnerability. A search for understanding was much more deliberate in the survivors’ accounts and the outcome was a greater understanding based more predominantly on external attribution, although not exclusively. The survivors searched for the understanding and answers to a number of questions. These questions related to a desire to understand what happened, why it happened, why they were victims, why they responded the way they did, why nobody helped them and why they had some positive feelings towards their abuser, and whether the abuser cared for them. Answers for these questions were not always possible. Rachel (S) explained that her search for understanding was like a ‘jigsaw puzzle in darkness’. A jigsaw needs piecing together bit by bit to reveal the true picture, which takes time. Rachel (S) emphasised the difficulty of the search for understanding by adding the complication of darkness to the jigsaw metaphor.

Similarly, Caroline (S) did not have a complete memory of the events surrounding her abusive experiences, but strongly desires that she could understand and know what happened.

I'm kind of old enough now, and I am old enough and I would like to know, I would love to know exactly, truly, what went on. I need to know... the full history. I am still sat here now not understanding the whole thing. I would like to be able to understand it. (Caroline - S)

She stated that she needed to know; this is important to a more successful recovery as detailed in the above quote from Jack, because an understanding of the 'peculiar logic' of one's life can provide an individual with a sense of peace. Susan (S) explained that whilst she knew the details of her abusive experiences, she desired to know why.

I think I know what went on now and I think I have a more of an understanding of it all...because it has happened there is nothing I can do about it, you know...Yeah, I would have liked to have known why. (Susan - S)

Susan (S) said that she would have liked to know, in the past tense, because her step-father has since died, thus, this avenue is not open to exploration. It doesn't mean that she no longer wants to know why. Furthermore, Susan (S) felt that it was not possible to get any truth out of her mother, 'because everything that she [mother] comes out with is a lie anyway'. She has, thus, resolved to the fact that she cannot get the answers to her questions.

When you look back, you try and analyse and think; you can come up with different answers for it every time, I'll never know. (Susan - S)

Understanding the 'peculiar logic' of their life and abuse was further complicated by the nature of the relationship between the offender and the child. The survivors in this study had very different relationships with their respective abusers and subsequently different feelings toward them. Jack (S) and Caroline (S) were very adamant that they hated their respective abusers. Rachel's (S) interaction with her step-father was predominantly abusive - sexual, physical, emotional and neglect. She found it difficult to understand why she kept going to visit him as an adult, after she had left home.

I don't remember why but still I used to go and visit him, and it's all confusing why, you know. (Rachel - S)

However, she reported that, after the abuse stopped, he started being nice to her and she thus developed some positive feelings towards him.

Because at one point he started being incredibly nice to me, which was when the abuse stopped. He was being really nice to me pretending and buying me things and giving me sweets, and you know and I suppose that's how I then became to care for him as a dad because I hated him before that. (Rachel - S)

Susan's (S) stepfather played a dual role of protector and abuser. On the one hand, he was sexually abusing Susan (S) and, on the other, he was providing her with some protection from her mother's violence and cruelty. In addition, he made her feel like she was worth something. Because of the family environment that Susan (S) lived in the supposed kindness and love that he showed was magnified. In a similar way to Rachel (S), Susan (S) appears to have continued dissonance about the fact that her step-father was not a nice person and that he abused her but counter-intuitively that she loved him.

After he died I realised that I did love him in some respects, does that sound strange? (Susan - S)

This makes sense in the 'peculiar logic' of Susan's (S) life and it is important for this to be understood in context.

The victim-offenders' understanding was, however, much more likely to involve internal attribution. This difference may be a consequence of a retrospective influence of their later offending; alternatively, it may be the result of a true difference and thus may have been influential in their later offending. Victim-offenders search for understanding, regarding their victimisation, appeared to occur as an incidental element of the SOTP. This theme considers the distinction between *internal attribution* and *external attribution*.



### 8.1.1 Internal Attribution

The five victim-offenders all internally attributed the cause of their abuse and questioned what it was about themselves that caused people to treat them the way they did. Glen (O) presented this thinking very explicitly.

Everywhere I went somebody wanted to hit me for some reason, you know what I mean (laugh)... For a long, long time I thought is it me or something; have I done something really wrong. Why is everybody always having a go at me! Why is it always my fault! You know what I mean I just couldn't understand it. (Glen - O)

When I feel bad I thought the problem was with me. (Glen - O)

Similarly, Gary's (O) comment suggested that he felt that there was something about him that would cause people to treat him the way his father had

I thought everybody was going to treat me the same way as my father had treated me. (Gary - O)

A tendency to internally attribute the cause of his abuse affected the way that Glen (O) thought about himself because he then justified what happened to him with negative beliefs about himself

May be I am the easy target or something like that. (Glen - O)

There is stuff going on for them that they can't deal with so they are taking it on someone else, someone that they maybe see as weaker. (Glen - O)

This internal attribution failed to recognise the construction of vulnerability that is presented above (see superordinate theme vulnerability for further discussion). Instead, this internal attribution resulted in a global belief that he was vulnerable, even as an adult (see subordinate theme perceived powerlessness as an adult below). Darren (O) provided another example of the global effect of internal attribution because he interpreted the fact that his mother did not or could not love him as he was not loveable. Similarly, Dan's (O) comment that 'lads seem to fancy their teachers' demonstrates that he had internally attributed the cause of his abuse and generalised this view to the wider population. The victim-offenders were more likely to still hold the same internal attributions for their abuse as they did at the time

(see superordinate theme entrapment and subordinate theme internal attribution above).

Similarly, the two survivors (Caroline & Paul), who continued to internally attribute the causes of their abuse, suffered the most debilitating grooming shadow and perceived powerlessness compared to the other survivors. Caroline (S) asked the question ‘why me?’ Caroline (S) was dismayed most by the fact that none of her siblings disclosed following her disclosure. This raised the question why her mother’s boyfriend abused her and not her siblings. Caroline (S) searched for reasons internal to herself to answer this question.

OK why on earth would it only be me? There were seven girls for him to choose from. (Caroline - S)

Her answer regarded her physical appearance.

Lots of people used to say, my God you look like you mother, and they never used to say it to any of the others, so maybe, and I used to say to Susan that maybe it is that, I looked like a young version of her. (Caroline - S)

Furthermore, her internal attribution can be seen in this next comment - ‘fucked in the head; sexually abused; not part of society; I am a monster’ (Caroline – S). Her understanding of the abusive situation and construction of her vulnerability did not reflect the construction of vulnerability, which is presented in superordinate theme vulnerability above. Caroline (S) stated that she continued to struggle because, although, she was able to regain her body but she despairs about not being able to do the same with her brain. This highlights the impact of internal attribution.

Paul (S) said ‘I felt like I wanted it’ and as such internally attributed the cause of his victimisation. As he was growing up, he pretended to be a superhero when he was alone, but he always felt that there was some sort of ‘evil’ inside of him.

I felt that there was some kind of evil in me – I felt different – I thought the devil was in me or something. I used to stupid things like look in the mirror until I saw the ugly side of me. (Paul – S)

Consequently, he described how there was a rage inside of him and furthermore, that one part of him wants to be loved but the other does not feel worthy.

I have a very kind, caring, loving side to me who wants to be loved and wants normal relationships... but then there is the other side that don't feel like I deserve it, feels like there is something wrong with me. (Paul – S)

He has only recently started to understand that, even though he was not physically forced during the abuse, he was manipulated. This highlights the possibility that the presence of physical force may result in a more accurate understanding of victims' vulnerability and allow them to appropriately externally attribute their victimisation.

The other three survivors (Rachel, Susan & Jack) had previously believed that people could identify them as a victim, which implied that they internalised that there was something wrong with them that could be identified. However, their search for safety led them to understand that this was not the case and they no longer believed that people could identify them as victims (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme awareness above).

One factor that existed for everyone was confusion about their sexual identity, which has been recognised in the literature for sometime (see Beitchman *et al.*, 1992). The survivors and victim-offenders all experienced some difficulties in relation to their sexual relations as adults, which included early consensual sexual activity and underage-sex, prostitution, reduced sexual desire, a reduced ability to say no to sex when propositioned and a lack of understanding about sexual boundaries. For example, Jack (S) explained that it was like having a sign lit up above his head that said he was available.

I didn't know what I was sexually; (pause) I didn't know that I had a choice over sexual partners. I felt as if I had a sign lit up above me wherever I went, up until my late twenties that said I was available. (Jack - S)

However, for the male survivors and the victim-offenders, who were abused by male offenders (Jack – S, Paul – S, Glen – O, Darren – O & Garry -O), their childhood sexual abuse resulted in confusion over their sexuality.

Back then at the time I hadn't really truly accepted my self as being gay, I didn't know what I was, gay, straight, bi, what, I don't know; I was confused, mixed up... I didn't know what I wanted. (Glen - O)

For the victim-offenders there was also inappropriate sexual contact with a child(ren); for example, John (O) explained that because his abusers made him do sexual acts with young girls this confused his sexual identity because as a consequence he only felt 'secure and happy' with young girls instead of adult women. However, this may have simply formed part of his justification for offending (see superordinate theme offenders' self-grooming and subordinate theme attribution for offending)

Because all I could relate back to were love and affection, knowing that it were wrong anyway, but it was the only way I felt like secure and happy, with a young girl instead of a er. (John - O)

Paul (S) explained that he was confused about his sexuality and his masculinity, due to the feeling that he was a willing participant; this left a shadow and the need to prove his masculinity to himself and to others particularly his father. He did this by demonstrating his physical strength and an image of hegemonic masculinity by joining the commandos, taking up Thai kick boxing and being sexually promiscuous. This started early with becoming more and more of a bully at school, acting like a clown and going out with all the 'in-girls'. Paul (S) identified a potential source of this need to prove his sexuality when he explained his confusion about the difference between his childhood anatomy and his abusers mature anatomy; he incorrectly concluded that there must be something wrong with him.

I was looking at him and seeing a well developed young man and looking at me and thinking well I don't look like that; there must be something wrong with me. (Paul - S)

Despite maturing physically this shadow remained with Paul (S).

Paul (S) also confessed that through his sexual promiscuity he had been looking for the intensity of his first climax that he experienced during the abuse. He explained that this early experience of oral sex, which was at a time before he was able to ejaculate, was very intense, and he was chasing that 'first buzz'.

The first pipe that you have is so intense, the rush that you get is so great, you are always chasing that first buzz and I guess throughout my sexual life I

have always been chasing that first feeling that he has left me with. (Paul – S)

The confusion of experiencing seemingly pleasant sensations during the abusive experience further reinforced Paul's (S) confusion about his sexuality. This again supports the theory that the pleasure inducing tactics of offenders may be the most damaging in relation to the later grooming shadow (see superordinate theme entrapment and subordinate theme cost-benefit analysis above, and also external attribution below).

### **8.1.2 External Attribution**

The survivors that experienced the most effective recovery, thus far, were the people who externally attributed the cause of their abuse. This appeared to be easier if the offender had also been violent, because it was easier to understand that they, the victims, had been forced when this force had been physical, as opposed to psychological or emotional. Unlike Caroline (S) and Paul (S), the remaining survivors found external answers to their questions. For Rachel (S) the question of 'why me?' was less complicated because she later found out that her step-father had also sexually abused her brothers and sisters, so there appeared to be little or no discrimination. Jack (S) was able to accept that he was victimised in the absence of an alternative victim.

But I, you know, I was at the particular age I was and there wasn't anyone else around. (Jack - S)

Susan (S) attributed her abuse to her step-father; she made particular reference to his drinking, as mentioned previously under superordinate theme entrapment, and his family's different morals.

But he came from a different culture and they don't have many morals... that is a horrible thing to say but I have lived with them, well his family didn't. (Susan - S)

Whilst all of the victim-offenders internally attributed at first, Gary (O) and Darren (O) began to externalise the cause of their abuse more during and following the SOTP, during which they also internalised their role in the abuse of their victims. For example, Gary (O) came to understand that he did not have any real education or

choice about sexual parameters. His external attribution also had a significant effect on perceived powerlessness (see subordinate theme perceived power as an adult below).

## 8.2 Perceived power

Individuals' perceived power as an adult was related to their perceived power as a victim. Perceived power as a victim<sup>3</sup> was inversely related to a perceived powerlessness in adulthood. Perceived powerlessness as a victim tended to result in a better recovery, relative to perceived power as a victim<sup>3</sup> and the survivors who experienced violence from their sexual abuser seemed more able to recognise their powerlessness as a victim. In addition, their recovery was facilitated by their recognition of both their powerlessness as a victim and their power to effect change in their environment to seek safety. Consequently, these individuals perceived themselves to have power as adults. The grooming shadow exists because of the links between individuals' entrapment and later functioning. The relationship between perceived power as a child and perceived power in adulthood is not fixed, but appeared to be dependent on the extent of recovery; a search for understanding was instrumental in aiding this recovery and associated perceived power in adulthood. This theme considers the survivors and victim-offenders *perceived powerlessness* and *perceived power in adulthood*.

### 8.2.1 Perceived powerlessness in adulthood

The victim-offenders perceived powerlessness mostly focused on their perceived powerlessness to desist from their offending (see superordinate theme offenders' self-grooming and subordinate theme perceived power). The victim-offenders' self grooming may be a composite part of their grooming shadow. The offender interviewees did not contain much discussion about victim-offenders' adulthood lives aside from their offending. This was mainly because the original intention of the interviews with offenders was to discuss their grooming of others rather than others' grooming of them; however, after it became apparent that five out of six were also victims of sexual abuse it did not seem right or sensible to exclude these

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<sup>3</sup> Again this is referring to the sense of responsibility for, and agency within, the abusive situation rather than the positive use of power to seek safety.

experiences from the study. Nevertheless, Glen (O) did indicate his sense of powerlessness because when he felt threatened he would arm himself with a weapon for protection. This aspect of his grooming shadow was an influential factor in his index offence, because he felt threatened following an incident at his local pub earlier in the day he chose to carry a knife that evening. After someone from the pub had upset him he went outside and stabbed multiple passers by.

The survivors were more aware of how their abuse had affected them. Paul (S) talked about there being a 'rage' trapped inside and he explained that he needed to 'release what is inside', but '[he is] too scared to let it out because [he doesn't] know where it will stop'. He fears losing control; however, periodically he loses control of sort because he ends up on a 'self-destruct mission'. He feels that only his girlfriend has the power to pull him out of it and he perceived himself to be powerless.

Caroline (S) demonstrates her perceived powerlessness by her 'hopeless' attitude that things will never change.

Like in my day and age you get no help whatsoever and you are a dead loss now for the rest of your life. (Caroline - S)

Caroline (S) draws a comparison between herself and a wild animal that had been backed in to a corner.

I suppose I can't steer out of the danger so like a wild animal when you get backed in to a corner you fight for life. (Caroline - S)

This metaphor of a trapped animal illustrates Caroline's (S) perceived powerlessness. Caroline started to fight back, not physically, but with her voice. She uses loudness as a defence and constantly fights back with her voice. She reported being a very quiet child and as she got older she also grew louder.

When I was very small I was quiet, I kept quiet. As I was growing older I was very mouthy. (Caroline - S)

Caroline (S) also encouraged her youngest son to be loud, because she believed that this would provide him with some sort of protection from potential offenders.

I mean he is allowed to shout and swear and scream, I am glad for that because abusers don't want nothing to do with them, they don't want the loud mouth do they (laugh) and he is a loud mouth and I am glad, I am glad he is a

loud mouth hopefully, that is going to save that [abuse] happening to him.  
(Caroline - S)

Jack (S) described his perceived powerlessness by using an illustration from Monty Python - where a giant foot appears in the sky and then comes down to crush the people below.

This feeling inside me that there was some sort of massive infection that was something that I couldn't even begin to think about, but was there...the way I have talked about it before is that the Monty Python foot in the sky that was the way I am, and then when it came, and when it was there above me, that was like here we go again, coz when the foot appeared that meant that there was trouble ahead and things would get very messy. (Jack - S)

This image implies that it is inevitable that difficult times would come and there is nothing Jack could do about it; life was going to get 'messy'. The term 'messy' echoes back to a previous experience that epitomised his perceived powerlessness as a victim. This was when his parents' ignored his seemingly obvious abuse. He explained that he was 'bleeding and had messed' himself (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme role of caregivers as well as superordinate theme entrapment and subordinate theme perceived power).

The survivors' experiences continued to plague them with flashbacks to incidents of sexual abuse. Jack (S) specifically reported that for a long time he had very vivid nightmares, which continued to have control over him and which he tried to suppress with the use of drugs and alcohol (see below). Life would be going well and then the flashbacks and nightmares would return.

I was getting older, getting in to late teens-early twenties, and still having childhood nightmares, real sit bolt upright covered in sweat with huge visions of monsters and stuff you know and not even like Walt Disney monsters but whole panoramas of just terror it was a remembrance, I think, of how I was when I was being raped and how it felt and just terror, just blind terror. (Jack - S)

The abusive experiences continue to draw the victim back. Jane (PO) appreciated that victims relive their experiences and that the victims are 'right back there, where the abuse was happening'. Paul (S) explained his experience of this as an adult



‘when [he] used to bump into [his abuser] in the shopping markets [he] would resort to being this embarrassed child’. He said it was not something that he was aware of at the time; it was an automatic response that he had no power over.

Paul (S) reported persistent dreams, which emphasised his perceived powerlessness.

I used to have a recurring dream... where I was running and it was like I wanted to take off. I was being chased by someone and I was taking off and I could get so far off the ground and I’d keep coming back down... I just could never run fast enough; the person chasing me was always catching me up’. ‘It is in your head’. ‘I want it out of my head (laugh) basically and, it is like I can’t get rid of it, it stays there. (Paul – O)

He also experienced flashbacks brought on by the use of sandpaper, which reminded him of his abusers stubble, and chlorine, which reminded him of his abusers semen. Paul’s (S) sense of being chased maybe like Jack’s (S) ‘foot in the sky’, which represented Jack’s (S) perceived powerlessness.

It is also important to note that, in Jack’s (S) case, his abusive experiences had an effect on his behaviour even without him being consciously aware of them. Rose (PO) pointed out that ‘a lot of people do bury it [abusive experiences] though, and say all of a sudden something happens...and triggers it off.’ However, individuals may be very successful and their lives are in control and something happens that strips them of that control, like in the example below.

We had a very, very successful head teacher, who hit the bottle, and she hit the bottle because she dealt with a young girl (victim of sexual abuse) in her school and the similarities of that case were so, so close to her own that Pandora’s box opened and she had no control over it and all of a sudden these things that she had under control came out like raging horses and ran rampage through her life and she hit the bottle and tried to commit suicide. (Barry - PO)

This picture of ‘raging horses’ running ‘rampage’ illustrates this lady’s lack of control over her experiences, which were set free and completely debilitated her. This head teacher resorted to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as drinking and attempted suicide, which are too common amongst victims of sexual abuse (see

below). Paul (S), Rachel (S) and Darren (O) also explicitly mentioned that they had attempted suicide.

The victim-offenders did not report having flashbacks. Considering that victim-offenders tended to internally attribute the cause of their abuse and view it more positively as something that they enjoyed, it is likely that offenders viewed the memories of their abuse in a more positive way and thus they may not have had the same negative affect as for the survivors. If this is the case, it would provide further evidence for the importance of awareness in determining the long term impact of sexual abuse, in addition to the impact of awareness on victims' entrapment stated above (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme awareness). However, it is not awareness *per se*, but rather how this awareness is understood. Therefore, this also highlighted the importance of the survivors' search for understanding as a means of recovery.

Individuals' responses to their perceived powerlessness result in a number of different strategies that could be considered to be escapism. Some of these strategies reflected those they had used as a victim and were a way of compensating for their perceived powerlessness. However, whilst these strategies may have been effective as a means of coping during their abuse they became maladaptive later on as they perpetuated their grooming shadow.

During his abusive episodes Jack (S) experienced dissociation and he describes this as going to a safe place.

I kept on going to this place where I was looking down on a car, but I was up in midair somewhere. How could I explain that, that was mad? I know now what I was talking about was dissociation, extreme dissociation... but nobody could tell me that it was OK to be like this, so it is jolly to find out that these things (laugh) happened and that you know this is what happens to people in trauma, that you go somewhere safe (Jack - S)

This sub-conscious strategy to search for safety formed part of Jack's (S) grooming shadow because he buried these memories very deeply, so that he was not aware of them in his conscious memory. Irrespective of this these experiences continued to have an effect on his behaviour.

Jack (S) also experimented with drugs and alcohol and found that they gave him a sense of being in the safe place.

When I first discovered drugs it was almost nearly being in the safe place.  
(Jack - S)

He, thus, began using drugs and alcohol as a means of coping.

If the flashbacks started then I used to keep those out by taking vast amounts of drugs and alcohol. (Jack - S)

Many victims of abuse turn to alcohol and drugs to help them deal with their past; evidence of this was seen in the police accounts. Again the message from one particular individual was 'if I get drunk, I feel better' (Steve's (PO) account of a victim's experience). Alcohol and drugs appear to provide an escape, albeit only temporary, which leads to many finding they are addicted. Paul (S) ended up with a thousand pound a week drug habit and a need to 'party' to escape from those feelings of being an abused boy.

Where individuals find it difficult to control their environment like Caroline (S) and Glen (O), for example, they chose to separate themselves off from society by spending a lot of time alone. Glen (O) used this strategy as a child and continued to use this strategy as an adult, spending lots of time walking his dog in some local fields and just watching the world going by, and periodically pushing people away.

I know what it is like to have that feeling of confidence, but keeping hold of it is difficult, you know what I mean (pause), so in the end I have to push everyone away and push everything away and just start again in one way and then again (laugh). (Glen - O)

Caroline (S) said she could not deal with society; it was too fast and harsh for her. At home she is in control and there is no one dictating to her. She wants to be left alone.

I stay here all the time, stay here out of people's way, there's too many nasty ones out there. (Caroline - S)

Being alone had also provided Caroline (S) with a means of escapism as a child and thus demonstrates quite clearly the grooming shadow.

The continued effects of CSA not only affect the victim, but others around them too.

In the end I kept not going to college, and I'll do that a lot even now... sometimes my youngest son misses a day of school because I wake up in the morning and I think I can't face that out there. (Caroline - S)

Caroline's (S) 'even now' comment showed that she was aware that she continued to be effected by her abusive experiences and how her grooming shadow impacted on her son. To Caroline (S) the world is a hostile place, which is reinforced by her perceived powerlessness.

Paul (S) struggled with his perceived powerlessness because, as a consequence of his upbringing and his desire to prove his masculinity (see subordinate theme internal attribution above), he did not want to be considered to be a weak person.

I didn't want to accept the fact that I was a victim – not supposed to be a victim; I'm supposed to be strong, a man... – a weak person is a victim, not a strong man. (Paul – S)

He did not comprehend that powerlessness in childhood can be different to powerlessness in adulthood and that admitting the former does not mean that as an adult they are generally powerless or weak. This attitude actually did more to debilitate his power, because it prevented him from seeking help.

'I used to think that only weak-minded people do that kind of stuff [speak to counsellors]'. (Paul – S)

Gary (O) struggled with his perceived powerlessness too. Gary (O) found it difficult to relate to people as an equal and instead was either 'subservient' to them or 'aggressive', which appeared to be a kind of defence.

### **8.2.2 Perceived power in adulthood**

Perceived powerlessness as a victim and perceived power as a victim to affect some control in their environment to seek safety combined to facilitate the most functional recovery, which was observed in individuals who had perceived power in adulthood. Further evidence for this relationship came from Gary's (O) account, because his increased self-awareness during treatment for his sexual offending aided his recovery from CSA; he found it beneficial, to his recovery, to acknowledge his powerlessness as a victim.

On reflection there was nothing I could do about it, you know and I just have to live with that knowledge. (Gary - O)

Furthermore, he perceived himself to have power in the present and awareness that he was responsible for the decisions that he made and makes (see superordinate theme offenders' self-grooming and perceived power).

Their perceived power as a victim which facilitated their search for safety, however temporary, involved taking control of the aspects of their lives where they could. This was reflected in the grooming shadows of many of the survivors. Susan (S) and Rachel particularly emphasised their perceived power and control which evidently they wanted me, as the researcher, to recognise. Susan (S) said 'I am a very self-sufficient sort of person'; she also made another downward comparison with her brother to highlight her perception of how she differs from him.

He [Susan's brother] was the one that couldn't accept what happened, until to this day he hasn't. Whereas I sort of think well that's life, that's happened, get on with it, but my brother will always be a victim all his life, because that's, I don't know why, we're different that way. (Susan - S)

For the survivors in this study, regaining control included claiming ownership of their body, so they had the option to say 'no' to sex, and acknowledging they had a choice about sexuality and sexual partners.

Control was an important theme in the recovery process and grooming shadow, not least because the very nature of child sexual abuse is about being controlled and victimised; thus, regaining control and being in control seemed to be imperative to survivors' recoveries. Susan (S) and Rachel (S) highlighted that there was a point at which they each made the choice to become survivors rather than remaining as victims. Susan (S) talked about 'becoming different' whilst Rachel (S) said 'it was just as simple as looking in the mirror one day and saying I don't want this anymore, I want respect for my body'. Rachel (S) was finally able to start her road to recovery when she was in a safe place that allowed her to take control, be herself and where there were people to help her.

Yeah, well because it was a safe place, because actually I knew that if...they [mum and new partner] chucked me out I could go there [friends], so I actually had the freedom to be able to be my self, air my views, and I was able to have a voice, and I would stick up for myself towards my mum's

[new] partner, I would stick up for myself toward my mum. It gave me the confidence and the boost I needed and not to be a victim anymore and I knew that if they chunked me out I would be happily accepted there, and it wasn't a worry actually. (Rachel - S)

The turning point in Susan's experience was at the age of sixteen when she made the decision that things were going to be different; she took control of her life and she was no longer reliant on her step-father, her abuser. Thus, when her step-father raped her at the age of sixteen, this had a lasting effect, more so than previous abusive experiences, because she perceived herself to have taken control. This demonstrates the importance of her perceived power. However, more importantly, she perceived that it was her power to disclose, that caused her step-father to stop. Whilst Susan (S) and Rachel (S) specifically referred to their turning point, Jack emphasised the journey of recovery and the importance of being in control of the pace of recovery, which can take a long time.

Part of recovery is just being able to, in one's own time, deal with the things as they come up and it does take time. (Jack - S)

Having been controlled for so long, the survivors present themselves as non-conformists. Susan (S) finds it very difficult to commit to things. Caroline (S) is constantly fighting back and refusing to conform to the controls of society, which she perceives as a dictatorship, with its demands and expectations. She refuses to be anybody's 'puppet' or 'silly little slave'. Both of these metaphors emphasise the element of being controlled. Caroline (S) stresses that control over issues such as whether she goes to work is the only essence she has got left.

All I know is that it took my whole life off me that is what it did do; it took everything off me. That's why I don't like this 9-5, you'll be here 9-5, 5 days, that is like someone again demanding telling me again that they are going to take the last little bit I have off me. (Caroline - S)

Similarly, Glen (O) refused to comply against his will.

My attitude is that if I don't like something I won't do it, simple as, I don't care who is telling me or what; if I don't like it I won't do it, that's my attitude. (Glen - O)

### 8.3 Acknowledgement

The police officers had seen first hand the importance of acknowledgement to victims of sexual abuse; they explained that for a victim having their day in court was very important. Barry (PO) was surprised at 'how cathartic making the complaint and seeing it through can be for people. It enables them to move on in their life.' (Barry - PO).

It is not just about locking them [offenders] up, but from the victims that I have spoken to the ones, that we get to court, there is a real sense of relief - 'I did the right thing, I told somebody, something was done about it, they have gone to court, gone to prison'. (Jane - PO)

In a society where only a very limited number of cases get to court, victims often do not get this acknowledgement.

None of the survivors or victim-offenders received acknowledgement through the courts for their abuse (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme role of the authorities); instead, they were left feeling rather worthless. This sense of worthlessness, however, appeared to be much more to do with the rejection, ignorance and abusive behaviour (non-sexual) of their caregivers. The apparent long-term impact of this stresses how significant the role of caregivers is on the level of victims' vulnerability, in the short-term and long-term (see superordinate theme vulnerability and subordinate theme role of caregivers for further discussion).

Caroline (S) felt that the world saw her as an 'alien', a 'weird little alien' that they did not understand. This emphasised how much she felt like an outsider.

That is how I feel, society basically put their foot on me and they said you are a weird little alien and we can't understand or deal with that sort of thing, so get back under that rock, you slime ball, and that is what I have been told my whole life and it is not funny. (Caroline - S)

Caroline (S) wants the world to understand and acknowledge her as a victim not as an 'alien'. Furthermore, Caroline (S) highlighted how it was unfair that somebody who has inflicted an addition on them self, for example drugs or alcohol, gets more acknowledgement and help than her, when her problems are as a result of being victimised as an innocent child.

I used to get angry with him, I used to say it is OK for you, people recognise that you are an alcoholic, you have inflicted that on yourself, people won't recognise me, I didn't inflict it; it was inflicted upon on me. (Caroline - S)

Caroline (S) did not acknowledge that sometimes peoples use of drugs and alcohol can be as a direct consequence of CSA. Some of the survivors and victim offenders stated that they had used drugs and alcohol as a means of coping and as such may not have brought it on themselves. Nevertheless, Caroline's (S) comment highlighted how she felt worthless and how her suffering had not being recognised even though it had been caused by someone else. The quote below demonstrated quite clearly how she perceived that society saw her as 'a nasty bit of trash'.

I am shit in society; I am crap. I don't go out and work, I don't want to, no thanks, I don 't want to be amongst them people, so society sort of said well it don't matter; you are scum; you are on social security; you're worthless. (Caroline - S)

Susan also clearly stated that she did not feel 'worthy', either to others or herself.

You have a self-destruct button and you sort of like you really don't think you are worthy of anything. (Susan - S)

She felt even more worthless when compared to people in positions of authority.

[I am] very mistrusting of people in authority, and always felt that they were better than me basically, and I was just scum, and that is exactly how I always felt. (Susan - S)

Mistrust was common in the survivors and victim-offenders accounts.

Acknowledgement of the survivors' suffering was very important to them and for some the lack of acknowledgement was a real problem to their recovery. The survivors wanted to be acknowledged as human beings, who were worthy.

All I know is I have been picked on all my life, and sometimes I get totally pissed off with it and I want to win, let me, please let me win, let me know I am a human being. Let me know that you listen to me, and that I might be slightly respected. (Caroline - S)

They no longer wanted to be silent or invisible. This lack of acknowledgement was a significant barrier to Caroline's (S) recovery and dominated her grooming shadow. Caroline (S) appeared to demonstrate this by drawing a parallel between herself and animals; she spoke very strongly about how animals suffer in silence. She even considered abuse of animals to be relatively worse than CSA.



What the hell do you want to be touching a baby for... that horrifies me, but it horrifies me even worse what people do to animals, because they are silent they can't speak out at any point. (Caroline - S)

She stated that the difference between animals and children is that children grow up and can eventually speak out.

I would love to be able to do something for animals, coz we kind of like do all our moaning they suffer in silence, the things that we do to them, and they suffer in silence, they've not got, well I know you have got all these RSPCA and these activists things, these people, but the majority they have to put up with it (pause) they are silent in it all. (Caroline - S)

I sense that Caroline (S) continued to perceive herself as silenced, because she had not received any recognition from her family regarding the abuse or from society, who she perceives to view her as worthless.

It upset me they all sat round a table one day and my younger sister (cough) she was there and she told, and one of them said Caroline said she was sexually abused by Dan, do you believe her, and the others said nooo, nooo, she's a liar. (Caroline - S)

Caroline's (S) desire to be mute is very confusing because she actually stated that she used loudness as her defence. Considering this, it seems that her reference to being mute related directly to not being acknowledged.

Caroline's (S) desire to be acknowledged was partially realised, by the displaying of a poster, which presented statistics detailing the prevalence of child sexual abuse. However, this acknowledgement was short-lived as the poster was temporary.

There used to be a poster, when I used to have to get buses, why they've taken that poster down; that should have been a classical poster that should have stayed forever. It was a big sheet of white paper with just black writing on it, very simple, and it just said something like, one in every five people have been sexually abused, something like that. And every time I used to go passed that poster I used to feel quite good, because there it is in black in white for the world to see it; they got rid of that poster. (Caroline - S)

Jack (S) emphasised the need to acknowledge the rest of the 'iceberg'. The rest of the iceberg is not visible above the surface, but it is there if you look.

There is a complete blank about the rest of the iceberg that is never talked about, that's stopped being children and become adults...it's like we don't exist. (Jack - S)

This lack of acknowledgement reinforces victims' sense of worthlessness. Jack (S) felt that his distress as a victim was invisible and societal ignorance of the suffering of adult survivors of child sexual abuse continues this sense of invisibility.

I can see this picture now in my head and how normal everything was and how distressed I was and it was obviously somehow invisible. (Jack - S)

The illustration of the iceberg is powerful, because it is not the tip of the iceberg that sank the Titanic, but rather that which lay below the surface. Thus, it is important to acknowledge these individuals and the root cause of their problems and consequently provide them with the help and support that they need rather than responding to them in a symptomatic way.

However, acknowledgement is a powerful thing and Susan (S), Rachel (S) and Jack (S) all talked about the positive effects of acknowledgement and knowing that they were not on their own, both in respect of social support and the knowledge that other people have had similar experiences. Rachel (S) identified having social support from friends as the most important factor that enabled her to leave her abusive home and allowed her to be herself. Jack's (S) revelation came when he attended a survivors' conference where his suffering was acknowledged and reflected in other people's experiences, which helped his search for understanding about the 'peculiar logic' of his life.

That [attending a conference for survivors] was a real concrete beginning that I wasn't alone and that other people had horrendous stories to tell and different ways of coping. (Jack - S)

This acknowledgement helped him to feel normal, accepted and no longer 'invisible'.

The survivors' grooming shadows and recoveries were significantly affected by the presence of social support, being valued and being deemed as worthy.

They [friends] made me feel like a person I was worthy of something; I wasn't a scumbag and a piece of shit. (Susan - S)

Being genuinely loved by someone for being herself was a powerful message to Susan (S), but her prior abuse meant she did not understand true love.

This was one person [husband] who cared for me, loved me for who I was.  
(Susan - S)

It was some time before she recognised it for what it really was. Unfortunately, this did not happen until after her husband passed away, but it was still a powerful message.

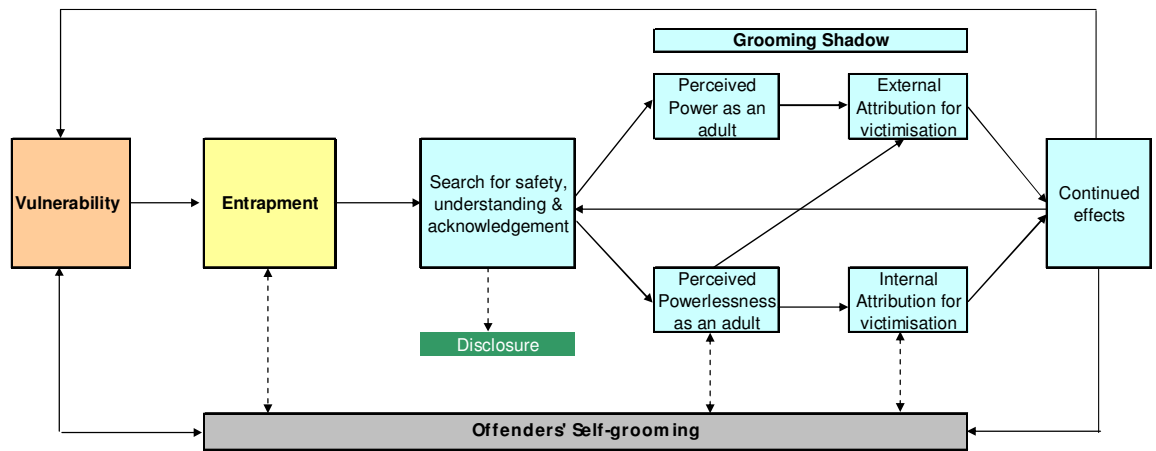
## Summary

This superordinate theme considered the grooming shadow left by the survivors' and victim-offenders' experiences of CSA (see Figure 4, overleaf, for a pictorial representation of this theme). The individuals' grooming shadows reflected their prior experiences of entrapment and the different elements of their vulnerability as children. Surprisingly, the actions and inactions of the survivors' and victim-offenders' caregivers were shown to have a significant impact on individuals' grooming shadows. This also links to how the survivors and victim-offenders understand and subsequently construct their childhood vulnerability. Internal attribution for the cause of their abuse and perceived power as a victim<sup>4</sup> were related to a perceived powerlessness in adulthood. Conversely, external attribution for the cause of their abuse, and recognition of their powerlessness as a victim, were more likely to give rise to perceived power in adulthood, particularly if they had perceived power as a victim to seek safety. The search for understanding and acknowledgement were significant in aiding victims' recovery, especially as they influenced their construction of their vulnerability as children and encouraged external attribution for their victimisation, recognition of powerlessness as a victim and the presence of power in adulthood.

The following chapter will now consider these findings in relation to the literature and subsequently presents two models that illustrate the current analysis and piece together what has already been presented. Consideration is then given to how these two models can facilitate prevention within a public health response to CSA.

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<sup>4</sup> Again this is referring to the sense of responsibility for and agency within the abusive situation rather than the positive use of power to seek safety.



**Figure 4 - Grooming Shadow**

## **Chapter 9 - Discussion**

This study deconstructed perspectives of sexual grooming in order to increase our understanding of this phenomenon. The first perspective was taken from the available literature. A review of the literature on sexual grooming (see Chapter 2) revealed the absence of an agreed definition for sexual grooming and lack of understanding about this phenomenon, which is evident in the lack of research on this phenomenon. This review highlighted that, unlike popular understanding, sexual grooming is targeted at the child, the child's environment and significant adults, and also inwardly to the offender through self-grooming, as opposed to just being targeted at the child. This review culminated in the provision of a clear definition, which incorporated these different dimensions of sexual grooming.

The prevalence of sexual grooming and recent media attention that disproportionately highlighted the use of the Internet to groom children requires the provision of a clear definition of sexual grooming and increased public awareness. This is especially significant in light of the new offence 'meeting a child following sexual grooming', which was introduced in Section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Home Office 2003). Furthermore, it is members of the public i.e. family and friends of victims and offenders that are best placed to identify sexual grooming and thus prevent sexual abuse and end it. A review of this legislation is presented in Chapter 3 and it identified issues of poor definition, limited the scope of legislation, how the nature of sexual grooming increases the burden of proof, and the failure of the legislation to be truly preventative as initially intended. The catalyst for the introduction of this legislation was the raised concerns about Internet grooming and the review offers a warning that pre-occupation with Internet grooming may distract away from the much more prevalent perpetrators – known and trusted adults – and as such may do a disservice to child protection in a similar way as the 'stranger-danger' campaigns. Furthermore, this review highlighted the fact that simply introducing legislation does not solve the problem and suggests that a public health approach to child sexual abuse is required. Prevention will be considered in more detail following discussion of the current findings.

The literature perspective, presented in Chapters 2 and 3, highlighted more about what sexual grooming is, but not so much about 'why' and 'how' it is effective.

This research contributed by considering more closely the latter questions ‘why’ and ‘how’. To explore these questions, this study utilised an innovative research design, which offers an individual contribution to this area of research by considering multiple perspectives rather than single perspectives, which is typical of earlier research. Therefore, interviews were undertaken with adult survivors of child sexual abuse and child sex offenders, because of their direct experiences and police officers, because of their contact with both victims and offenders following disclosure. Considering these different perspectives provided extra dimensions to our understanding of the sexual grooming phenomenon. This method allowed consideration of consensuses and differences between groups and within groups. Furthermore, it provided a form of triangulation of knowledge and perspective; thus, by getting closer to the individual we get closer to the universal (Smith 2004).

The current findings support those reported in Chapters 2 and 3 which stated that the child is not the only target of sexual grooming, but also the child’s environment and significant adults, as well as being internally targeted towards the offender. The analysis of the interviewees’ experiences centred around four key-themes: vulnerability; offenders’ self-grooming; entrapment and grooming shadow. Together these factors represent the grooming process as experienced by the individuals in this study. This process highlighted the pre-offence behaviour of the offender, which has been the focus of previous literature, but it also presented a broader representation of vulnerability, offenders’ self-grooming and entrapment, which was not only dependent on the offenders’ actions but acknowledged the important role of significant adults and the victim in the dynamic nature of the process and, furthermore, the continued influence of the grooming experience through the shadow that it leaves. Notably, there appeared to be a link between the survivors’ and victim-offenders’ attributions as victims and their later grooming shadows. Not only does this research offer a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of sexual grooming, but it also offers some potential for contributing to prevention and intervention, for both victims and offenders, through the increased understanding of sexual grooming and the psychological constructs involved in this process.

## **Vulnerability**

The superordinate theme vulnerability reflects the grooming of the environment and significant others outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2. A child's vulnerability can be split in to two elements – natural vulnerability and situational vulnerability. The former is unavoidable, but the second is dependant on the environment in which a child lives. This theme incorporated two elements: responsibility for victims' vulnerability, which identified that the responsibility for vulnerability existed at three different levels - personal, cultural and structural levels - and awareness of this vulnerability. The findings indicate that a child's vulnerability was not inherent in the child, but rather a factor in their environment. This requires a conceptual shift from perceiving a child as vulnerable to perceiving the situation as vulnerable.

Responsibility for vulnerability can be attributed to individuals other than the offender for their contribution to a victim's level of vulnerability. The first dimension of this theme highlighted the presence of responsibility of vulnerability at a personal level, with particular reference to the role of caregivers' and offenders' motivations. The survivors and victim-offenders stressed that the deviant norms of family life and unmet needs of the victims facilitated the offenders' access and thus their vulnerability. The survivors were very explicit about their feelings regarding their caregivers' role in their level of vulnerability, so much so that when meeting with one of the adult survivors to discuss the analysis, he specifically asked if this theme included the role of his parents in making him vulnerable to his abuser, which reflects betrayal, which was one of the traumagenic dynamics of child sexual abuse (CSA) suggested by Finkelhor and Browne (1985). One of the offenders emphasised the role of the caregiver in the child's vulnerability and it was generally accepted that the caregivers acted as gatekeepers and thus were a potential barrier to offenders' intentions. The survivors' attribution of responsibility to their parents 'failure to protect' served a very important function, which was to remove the blame from themselves and externalise the cause of their abuse; however, this function was not evident in the victim-offenders accounts (see grooming shadow for further discussion).

Mcalinden (2006) stated that 'grooming' has been used to describe the preparatory stage of sexual abuse; however, the important role of caregivers in elevating a child's

vulnerability purports a more diverse view of sexual grooming that includes the actions of people other than the abuser in the grooming process. It was stated previously that it was important to consider that offenders often create their own opportunity to offend. However it seems more apparent that, whilst offenders do create their own opportunities to offend, they utilise a child's existing vulnerability; thus, by association, the role of the caregivers is an integral part of the sexual grooming process, which supports the literature outlined in Chapter 2.

Interestingly, the most significant factors affecting a child's vulnerability were not initiated by the offender, but rather factors that offenders took advantage of that were caused or ignored by the child's significant adults or caregivers. Consequently, whilst parents and caregivers have the potential to offer children the best protection, they may also present the greatest risk. This comment is in no way intended to excuse offenders' behaviour, or to support a 'mother-blaming' discourse, but it is important to acknowledge areas where it is possible to increase child protection, including the role of adults, other than the offender, in mediating the level of a child's vulnerability. Everyone who has involvement with children should take responsibility for CSA prevention, especially considering a child's significant adults are such an important factor in the level of a child's vulnerability. With or without knowing it, any adult could be a pawn in the game of chess that offenders play with their child victims. It is vital that everyone with any involvement with children is increasingly aware of the factors making a child vulnerable, but without falling in to moral panic.

The tendency for extra-familial offenders to have more victims and intra-familial offenders to have fewer victims and for these victims to be subjected to prolonged, repeated abuse (Smallbone & Wortley 2001) is testament to the increased vulnerability within the family. Furthermore, previous research highlights that the offender's interactions with their victims are not necessarily unbeknown to the child's parents, which is also true for all the survivors and victim-offenders in the current sample and a significant number of examples provided by the police. Smallbone and Wortley (2001) found that 71% of their sample reported that the victim's parents were aware that they were spending time alone with the child. Grooming is a well-organised long-term activity (Sanford 1982). For example, Smallbone and Wortley (2001) reported that many offenders knew their victims for



more than 12 months before they abused them (76% of intra-familial offenders, 28% of extra-familial offenders, 39% of offenders who had both intra-familial and extra-familial victims). Twelve months is a long time in the life of a child. This goes to show how offenders are willing to wait and also supports the above finding that parents are very important in the level of a child's vulnerability. In light of the caregiver's influence in determining the level of a child's vulnerability, future research would benefit from incorporating consideration of this variable.

An offender's motivation to abuse a child represents a personal level contribution to a child's vulnerability and this motivation is the ultimate contributory factor because, without an offender's motivation, the level of a child's vulnerability is irrelevant. The offenders in this study specified a number of different motivations: sexual attraction to children/child; proximity of the child to the offender especially at a time when offenders faced difficulties in their lives; and revenge by proxy where the child(ren) were a substitute for the original aggressor. This revenge was either as a consequence of past events and the victim physically resembled the original aggressor or from recent events that involved someone close to or related to the child. As such, caregivers may contribute to a child's increased vulnerability directly, if they are the abuser; indirectly, if they are involved in maintaining an environment that facilitates abusive behaviour; or by association, where a child is vulnerable because they are related to someone perceived by the offender to have done them an injustice.

The personal level influence, discussed above, exists within the context of the cultural level influence. The current research findings highlight three cultural level influences affecting a child's vulnerability. The most significant factor was the offenders' inherited power and status, which facilitated their access to potential victims and provided a considerable level of trust by virtue of this power and status. This also reflects societal norms that children should be subservient to adults and that they should do as they are told. As such the power and status of offenders is significant because it reinforces the relative powerlessness of children.

The police highlighted two further factors contributing to children's vulnerability at a cultural level. They stated that increased freedom and materialism in the current postmodern-consumer society puts children at more risk because offenders are able

to use children's desire for both freedom and material things to facilitate access and opportunities to abuse. Furthermore, the police stated that the rise of new technologies had had an impact on the crimes they investigated. Their bugbear was not with 'Internet grooming' *per se*, as would be suggested by the recent media interest in this phenomenon, as discussed in Chapter 3, but rather the use of the Internet to access and/or distribute indecent images of children and the use of mobile phone technology to by-pass parental control and communicate with potential victims and to a lesser extent the use of the Internet for the same purpose; the emphasis being on the former three uses. However, some individuals use the Internet to satisfy their sexual desires because of feelings of social inadequacy (Laulik, Allam, & Sheridan 2007) and as such the Internet may offer a new forum for sexual deviance by people who may not otherwise have acted on temptation, for others it simply offers more opportunities with perceived less risk.

The police experiences reflected the concerns outlined in Chapter 3 regarding the use of the Internet by offenders and the associated difficulty of proving culpability beyond reasonable doubt. Offenders did not refer to the role of new technologies in increasing children's vulnerability; however, it is likely that this is because the sample was made up of convicted offenders and offenders that are currently incarcerated and therefore the use of the Internet and mobile phones was not part of the offending pattern. The police highlighted how, on the one hand, the new technologies provided the offenders with a new means by which to operate; but on the other hand, they provided the police with a new means of collecting 'hard' evidence, which was much more credible in a court of law and thus more conducive to securing convictions. Consequently there is more opportunity for offenders to be apprehended, convicted and ultimately identified for future management and deterrence. Therefore, the role of new technologies played a dual role in the level of a child's vulnerability. However it is vital that the recent attention given to Internet grooming does not distract from the truth that children are at significantly more risk from known and trusted adults, which has the potential to distract from the truth in the same way that stranger-danger campaigns inadvertently did in the past.

At a structural level, the authorities also had a part to play in the level of the children's vulnerability. Perceived failures of the relevant social services and schools, to protect victims and take action when a child was at risk, were identified.

This point was made most strongly by the adult survivors following retrospective awareness of the authorities' involvement and apparent lack of action. The Roman Catholic Church was also identified by one of the survivors as responsible because of the power and status afforded to the abuser in his role as a Priest and later when this survivor made the Church aware of the Priest's abusive history, because the Church failed to act even though the Priest was working as a teacher in a Church school.

Given the high rate of intra-familial cases of CSA the role of significant adults outside of the immediate family is really important. However, as with parents, these supportive adults outside the family can provide significant protection or significant risk to children. This is borne out in the data: For one survivor, school had been the sanctuary where she received lots of positive attention, for one of the victim-offenders abuse by his mother was coupled with abuse by two teachers. Furthermore, the police officers stressed the importance of the 'fantastic interface' that schools have with children and how that facilitated their investigations. The police officers emphasised that the quality of their investigations is significantly affected by the training they, and other professionals, receive.

Nevertheless, teachers are over-burdened and tend to have large classes, which surely has an impact on the attention they can give to each child and their ability to identify possible victims. However, women who had been victimised in childhood, reported that 'being able to find supportive relationships outside the family and recognising that the abuse was not their fault were important factors' associated with their resilience, which impacted on their recovery following abuse (Hecht & Hansen 2001). The survivors in the current study also specifically mentioned the value of social support in their recovery (see grooming shadow below), which is dependent on the presence of significant adults or friends to provide this support.

The influence of the legal system on children's vulnerability was also identified, because of the nature of the legal obstacle course that must be navigated to achieve a conviction. The police officers reported that their efforts to succeed in this were significantly hampered by the system within which they had to work. The officers specifically mentioned the role of the CPS as 'judge, jury and executioner' with the implication that many cases, perceived as strong or watertight, do not get heard in

court. This highlighted the police officers' frustration with the poor conviction rates of child sex offenders, which is a frustration shared with the wider community. Misguided targets and lack of resources were further identified as major contributors to this short-fall. The implication is that the legal system may not provide the expected deterrent to potential offenders, thus increasing children's vulnerability to abuse because the risk of being caught and subsequently convicted is deemed to be low. This is an important factor in the level of a child's vulnerability because the offenders reported that getting away with an abusive act propelled them to do it again and perpetuated their offending.

The second aspect of the superordinate theme vulnerability was awareness, both survivors' and offenders' awareness of vulnerability. The survivors' accounts indicated the possibility that a prior risk of harm may have resulted in an increased vigilance to vulnerability; this was confirmed as a possibility in the offenders' accounts. The survivors' awareness of vulnerability was varied but the offenders' awareness of vulnerability was evidenced by their targeted behaviour towards their victims. Awareness appeared to be related to a child's vulnerability with three paths of influence. (1) Offenders seemingly used their awareness of vulnerability to target their victim(s) and also facilitate their self-grooming (see outline of self-grooming below). (2) The survivors that reported being more aware of children's vulnerability used this to break the cycle of abuse and were thus more vigilant in an attempt to prevent or stop abuse. (3) However, other survivors presented experiences that indicated that there may be an intergenerational transmission of risk between caregivers who were sexually abused, and their children who became vulnerable because of the adults' prior victimisation. Their own vulnerability to an offender's tactics may be increased because of the continued effects of their own victimisation (see outline of grooming shadow below) especially since significant adults are also the target of offenders' grooming behaviour, as indicated in the previous literature (see Chapter 2). This pattern was supported by the police accounts.

The current analysis suggested that individuals may be more vigilant of risk and vulnerability as a result of a prolonged experience(s) of victimisation or trauma such as CSA, domestic violence (including physical abuse) or, in the case of one offender, fear of his sexuality being exposed. It seems theoretically possible that any enduring form of risk of harm may facilitate this increased awareness, for example being a

victim of bullying. This is supported by Sutton (2003), who stated that just as close and positive relationships cause children to be aware of, and responsive to, other people's thoughts and actions, so too can bullying relationships. This can be true both of the bully and the victim, but the bully may use this awareness in an undesirable way.

A risk of harm indicates a possibility of rejection and would suggest that an individual may have an increased need to belong. A high need to belong and rejection have been found to result in an increased sensitivity to social cues (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer 2000; Pickett *et al.* 2004). This enhanced sensitivity relates to social perception rather than cognitive ability more generally (Pickett *et al.*, 2004), so the use of this increased perception does not imply improved thinking skills. Research with maltreated children with high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has shown that they have faster reaction times in identifying emotions, particularly fear (Masten *et al.* 2008); this supports the notion that risk of harm increases awareness, which acts as a defensive strategy to avoid harm.

Given the prevalence of maltreatment in child sex offenders' histories (Craissati *et al.* 2002), it seems logical to consider the need to belong in relation to their offending. A need to belong and the associated increase in sensitivity to social cues are reported to be adaptive because they facilitate an individual's search for inclusion (Pickett *et al.* 2004). However, it seems feasible that this can become maladaptive in the presence of deviant motivational goals. Thus in regard to child sex offenders, a prolonged risk of harm experienced in childhood may present as a distal factor resulting in an increased vigilance and awareness, in relation to their offending, in order to maintain self-preservation. Alternatively, it may be a proximal factor where a risk of harm is heightened because of the risk associated with being a sexual offender. This would be true prior to disclosure, because of the risk of disclosure, or post conviction, because of the risk of harm associated with being a child sex offender and the need to avoid harm.

An increased perception of social cues associated with a need to belong suggests a better identification of emotions. Contrary to this Ward, Hudson and France (1993) found that child sex offenders were least accurate at identifying emotions compared with other prisoners and controls. They most often confused fear as surprise.

However, more recently a study investigating child sex offenders' ability to recognise emotional expressions (fear & surprise) following sexual priming and neutral priming compared to a control sample of non-offending males found that sexual priming significantly increased child sex offenders' recognition of fear (Oliver *et al.* 2009). This finding suggests that child sex offenders' recognition of emotions, specifically fear, may be situational for example in the presence of sexual stimulation (conscious or unconscious) and it may be that a need to belong could explain this increased sensitivity because of the potential for harm associated with sexual connections.

A need to belong and sexual priming have an impact on perception and information processing and thus warrants further investigation because of its potential for contributing to our understanding of sexual grooming, but it would also link with recent work by Ward and Stewart (2003) exploring links between human needs and criminogenic needs. Furthermore, perception and information processing is not just about the recognition of emotions or social cues, but also how that information is used, which will depend on motivational goals and implicit theories, which guide one's understanding of the world and actions in it.

Some survivors felt that they were aware of others' vulnerabilities, whilst others were not. It has been proposed that a lack of awareness results in an increased risk to the next generation. Halliday reports that 89% of childhood victims of sexual abuse go on to have children who are victims (1985). This figure maybe a little excessive; either way, it does indicate a trend. A three-generational study of transmission of risk for sexual abuse found that mothers of abused children suffered from more domestic violence, which included physical, sexual and emotional abuse; thus their children were exposed to an environment where abuse was normalised and more accepted (Leifer *et al.* 2004), which also echoed the experiences of the current participants who often experienced multiple forms of abuse.

People often select partners who treat them the way they expect to be treated, because most people seek consistency in their 'view of self' (Marshall *et al.* 1997) (see grooming shadow below for further discussion of 'view of self'). Furthermore, offenders' insecurities arising from insecure attachments mean that some offenders feel more secure in a relationship where they can control the other person and where

this person looks up to them (Ward, Hudson, Marshall *et al.* 1995). These factors may perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of risk especially if prior victimisation leaves people expecting to be treated in a similar way or a survivor's grooming shadow warrants them less able to escape an abusive environment if it transpires.

Leifer *et al.* (2004) concluded that the effect of a mother's history of child sexual abuse is mediated by problems experienced in adulthood, for example domestic violence. This is supported by Schuetze and Eiden (2005) who found that the effect of CSA on a survivor's parenting capability was mediated by depression and domestic violence. Furthermore, female survivors of CSA have a higher incidence of being single mothers (Roberts *et al.* 2004), which may inadvertently increase their children's vulnerability to CSA, because living with both biological parents has been reported to reduce children's vulnerability (Vogeltanz *et al.* 1999), which supports the police officers' views shared in the current study. Conversely, Fassler *et al.* (2005) stated that living within a biological family was not necessarily protective for the participants in their sample. However, Vogeltanz *et al.* (1999) found that when CSA victims lived with both biological parents they were at more risk if their mother was an alcoholic, but their father was not an alcoholic and Fassler *et al.*'s (2005) sample included an over-representation of women whose parents were alcoholics, so this may offer one explanation. Vogeltanz *et al.* (1999) suggest that the increased risk related to mother's drinking and father's non-drinking may be associated with marital conflict or tensions because of this discrepancy and research has found an increased risk of CSA in families with marital conflict (Finkelhor, 1984), which may lead to poor attachments with children and/or less nurturing and protection (Alexander, 1992). This can make children more vulnerable to exploitative relationships (Finkelhor, 1994). It is fair to say that living with both biological parents is not always protective, as in the case of one of the survivors in this study, but CSA remains more common in unstable families.

Whilst an intergenerational transmission of risk for sexual abuse has been recognised, it is not automatic. In a study of 67 mothers of children who had suffered sexual abuse, it was found that 34% of these mothers had themselves been sexually abused as children compared to 12% of a control group of 65 mothers, who did not have children that had been sexually abused (Oates *et al.* 1998). Although

one third of survivors of childhood sexual abuse have significant problems with parenting, most break the cycle (Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe 1988). Hooper and Koprowska (2004) argue that the problems that this one third of parents experience can be attributed to agencies giving them inadequate support in response to their early victimisation and subsequent mental health problems. This may leave some people open to further victimisation because of the continued effects of their victimisation and the lack of help and support in their recovery. It seems likely that increased reactive work with victims following abuse may also be a proactive strategy for preventing abuse in future generations because this would impact directly on a survivor's grooming shadow (see below for more details of the superordinate theme grooming shadow).

Previous literature has concentrated more on the actions of the offender; Chapter 2 reviewed the available literature and highlighted the importance of the offender grooming the environment and significant adults. However, there was little emphasis on the direct relationship between the level of a child's vulnerability and the actions or inactions of their significant adults and consequences of the child's environment, that are all factors of which offenders are able to take advantage. Whilst the current study confirms that offenders are responsible for their offending, it also became clear that society as a whole needs to take more responsibility for their role in making children vulnerable. This construction of vulnerability reflects an ecological systems theory approach to understanding vulnerability, which considers the effect of multiple systems at the micro, meso, exo, and macro levels and takes the onus off the child.

### **Offenders' self-grooming**

As stated above, it is the presence of an offender's motivation to abuse a child that implicates the level of the child's vulnerability. In support of the suggestion made in Chapter 2, offenders exhibit a self-grooming process, which affects their motivation. Self-grooming seems like the offenders' feedback loop that progressively reinforced their offending and, according to Finklehor (1984), allowed them to overcome their internal inhibitors. The current analysis highlights that the offenders' attribution for their offending, their perceived power to desist and a cost-benefit analysis of the risk are influential in the self-grooming process.



All of the offenders seemed to have externally attributed the cause of their offending at the time of the offence, or they had reconstructed their recall to be offence-supportive. However, one offender had internalised that he was a child sex offender and had decided that he may as well do it to the best of his ability, but he still attributed the cause of his individual offences to external causes. Along with the other offenders he believed that he was powerless to desist. Perceived powerlessness and external locus of control are also associated with low self-esteem, which is likely to create a perpetual cycle because of the tendency for people with low self-esteem to blame external factors (Marshall *et al.* 1997).

The offenders' external attributions included downward comparisons to others who they deemed worse than themselves, including other sex offenders; social comparison has been shown to be particularly important when self-esteem is under threat, for example as a consequence of negative self-evaluation (Wood, Giordano Beech, & Ducharme 1999). Notably this also related to relapse; where offenders internally attributed the cause of their relapse they experienced shame and low self-efficacy to prevent future relapses (Hudson, Ward, & Marshall 1992). This is problematic because shame causes significant personal distress, which is often managed through 'defensive externalisation' (Tangney *et al.* 1996), which would undermine the treatment goals. This highlights the dynamic role of attributions and proposes that the relationship between internal and external attributions is not linear, but that they can have a positive or negative effect.

In addition, some offenders believed that they lived in a dangerous world and that they should hurt others before they get hurt themselves. It has been suggested that children that grow up in a hostile environment may develop 'nasty theory of minds' (Happé & Frith, 1996). Despite this being a potentially adaptive mechanism at the time, it is likely to have a negative effect on their view of the world. A number of distorted implicit theories have been identified as dominating offenders' views of the world (Keenan & Ward 2000; Ward & Keenan 1999), including a 'dangerous world' view, which was reflected in a couple of the current offenders' accounts. Alternatively, some offenders conceived that their victim(s) were mutually consenting. Offenders' external attributions were also significantly affected by the role of offender motivation, which is outlined under superordinate theme vulnerability (see above).

Paedophiles are universally despised by society and thus are likely to feel socially excluded. Social exclusion has been shown to increase physical pain tolerance and increase emotional numbness (DeWall & Baumeister 2006), which could indicate a situation-dependent empathy deficit which, in the case of offenders, could subsequently be constructed as victim-specific empathy deficit. Furthermore, when someone is emotionally distressed they are more inclined to act to make themselves feel better rather than control their impulses (Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister 2001). Bumby (2000) stated that victim-specific empathy deficits identified in offenders may be 'selective inhibition' through cognitive distortions, in order to protect themselves from shame and guilt, and therefore does not represent a traditionally conceived empathy deficit.

Recent theorising has proposed that external attributions and associated cognitive distortions serve to protect offenders from negative self-evaluation (Marshall *et al.* 1997; Marshall *et al.* 2001; Maruna & Copes 2005). Maruna (2005) suggested that requiring offenders to internalise their behaviour may be damaging and that the presence of external attributions makes an offender easier to treat; this assertion was met with a positive response from the NOTA conference in 2005. Furthermore, one of the offenders in the current sample demonstrated the danger of internalising the belief that he is a child sex offender, because he then decided that he may as well do it to the best of his ability. Based on the theory that the use of external attributions is protective, their presence indicates that the offenders need to protect themselves, which they would not need to do if they were at ease with an abusive view of self. Maruna (2005) concludes that cognitive distortions may represent fundamental attribution errors, which is a common occurrence in general human behaviour and should not be considered to be necessarily deviant. However, it is important to recognise that some attributions may be defensive, as described above, whilst others may be causal. Furthermore, it also seems logical that defensive attributions could become causal if they feed in to the implicit theories, which support CSA, highlighted by Ward and Keenan (1999), for example 'children as sexual beings'.

Research on the effect of respondent gender on blame attribution in hypothetical scenarios depicting adult rape (Grubb & Harrower 2008, 2009) or CSA (Graham, Rogers, & Davies 2007) has identified that males have a significantly high

propensity to blame the victim more and the perpetrator less. These findings have been explained by referring to Shaver's (1970) 'defensive attribution hypothesis', which suggests that people who consider themselves to be at risk of being victimised in a future event seek 'harm avoidance' by attributing more blame to the perpetrator and less to the victim. This characterises women's responses. Furthermore, when someone perceives that they are at risk of being blamed for something they will seek 'blame avoidance' by blaming the victim more and the perpetrator less. This characterises men's responses. It could be that within the general population, males have a tendency to externally attribute. Therefore, the observed pattern amongst offenders may simply reflect a male tendency of 'blame avoidance' rather than a specific deviancy, although obviously it also serves this purpose.

There appeared to be a significant interaction between attribution and perceived power because, prior to being convicted, two of the offenders had made attempts to inhibit further offending. Furthermore, following treatment these two offenders had accepted responsibility for their offences, which involved internally attributing the cause of their offending whilst also recognising the influence of external factors and most importantly they perceived that they had power to desist and manage their risk. Wood & Dunaway (1998) reported that many sex offenders committed sexually deviant crimes in order to compensate for a perceived lack of control over events in their own lives. As such these two offenders were, in the researcher's opinion, least likely to reoffend, relative to the other offenders in the current sample, because they embraced the SOTP and took from it a 'toolkit' of strategies to prevent recidivism. So it seems that acknowledging oneself as a child sex offender was counter-productive in the absence of a perceived power to change or desist; thus, the relationship between internal and external attributions was not linear and perceived power appeared to be a mediating factor. This is supported by Beech and Fordham (1997), who emphasised the importance of promoting hope in offenders as part of treatment objectives, which helps them appreciate that they have the power to change. Therefore, the perceived power to change/desist may be the best predictor of treatment efficacy.

The current research findings suggest that without offenders' perceived power to desist, treatment is likely to be either counterproductive or its efficacy significantly reduced. This point aligns with recent considerations by Ward *et al.* (2004), which

discussed the offenders' Readiness to Change Model. It deemed three factors to be of primary importance in determining offenders' readiness for treatment: responsivity, motivation and readiness. Responsivity refers to offenders' ability to engage with the content of the course, motivation relates to a willingness to change and readiness concerns factors internal to the offender and factors in the therapeutic context that will either promote efficacy or undermine treatment goals. This research suggests that offenders' perceived power to desist would be a significant factor affecting their readiness to change, which in turn may implicate their motivation and responsivity to treatment. Furthermore, perceived power may be a feature of the treatment context because the response of the therapist is very beneficial when it is 'warm and empathic' (Marshall 2005), but detrimental when it was overly controlling (Beech & Fordham 1997).

The offenders with the fewest external attributions demonstrated the most distress during their interviews and were the most positive about their SOTP experience and its contribution to their ability to manage their risk. A positive attitude to treatment increases the internalisation of the treatment messages and motivation to abstain from future offending (Beech, Fisher, & Beckett 1999). Furthermore, this observation is supported by research that found psychological distress was inversely related to the extent of denial and positively associated with motivation to accept therapy (Gibbons, de Volder, & Casey 2003). Bumby (2000) reported a study (Bumby, Levine, Cunningham, 1996) which found this association in outpatient sex offenders where personal distress was positively related to externalisation and shame. As the offenders feelings of shame increased so did their blaming of others. This is consistent with the theory that external attributions and cognitive distortions act as defence mechanisms.

Furthermore, cognitive deconstruction (Ward, Hudson, & Marshall 1995) may affect how offenders experience their offending behaviour because cognitive deconstruction serves to protect offenders from negative experiences and negative self-evaluation, by processing at a lower, concrete level that avoids abstract processing and recognition of the wider implications of their behaviour. This may occur as a result of an inability to suppress deviant desires due to under-regulation of behaviour (Ward, Hudson, & Keenan 1998). Offenders may also enter a cognitive deconstructive state due to situational factors such as stress or negative mood.

Cognitive deconstruction involves processing at a lower, more concrete, level i.e. muscular movements, and rewards of behaviour, rather than social action. Resultantly, the individual has much more focus on feelings of pleasure and less awareness of the consequences of their behaviour.

However, cognitively deconstruction focuses attention on the here and now, and on immediate gratification (Ward, Hudson, & Marshall 1995). Conversely, sexual grooming rarely relates to immediate gratification because offenders invest a lot of time and energy in grooming the environment, significant others and the victim. Furthermore, for the majority of people it is difficult to sustain a cognitively deconstructed state over long periods of time (Ward, Hudson, & Marshall 1995); thus, it seems likely that this phenomenon is most likely to surround the offence itself. Nevertheless, whilst cognitive deconstruction may be short lived, the effect of experiencing the abuse in a deconstructed state may be long lasting because of the potential impact on the offenders' view of the abusive experience and associated cognitive distortions.

Ward and Keenan (1999) proposed that child sex offenders have cognitive distortions in the form of implicit theories which relate to themselves, their victim(s), and the world. Cognitive deconstruction may facilitate the development of a distorted view of events that subsequently justifies their behaviour and so may be an important aspect of the self-grooming process. For offenders with inhibitory goals it is possible that they are in a position to offend before they enter a cognitive deconstructed state. Offenders with appetitive goals are unlikely to cognitively deconstruct unless they experience negative affect as a consequence of their offending.

Cognitive deconstruction may offer one explanation for offenders' sense of powerlessness in their offending because of the reduced ability for abstract or complex thought. Processing at a lower, more concrete, level means that behaviour is more likely to be habitual or automatic; thus, it is likely to facilitate the activation of implicit planning (Ward, Hudson *et al.* 1998; Ward, Hudson, & Marshall 1995) and automatic behaviour as a result of pre-thought offence scripts or previous offences (Ward & Hudson 2000). Alternatively, perceived powerlessness may represent or

function as another cognitive distortion especially considering its potential for alleviating negative evaluation.

Despite the offenders' perceived powerlessness to desist they appeared to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the risk involved, be it consciously or subconsciously. The factors influential in this so-called analysis were, firstly, the offenders' self-serving focus on how the offenders' desires would be satisfied with little or no consideration for the potential impact on the victim(s). Offenders also tested their victim to see if they were responsive to their tactics and whether they thought they could get away with it, they went on to commit an offence; this consideration depended on the child's vulnerability and the child's response to their advances. Furthermore, to limit suspicion, some offenders compartmentalised their abusive behaviour and to some extent lived two separate lives or presented as two separate characters. Cost-benefit analysis is discussed in more detail under the superordinate theme entrapment (see below) because this is a two way process, which is dependent on both the offenders' actions and their appraisal of the victims' responses.

Considering the potentially protective function of external attribution, Maruna (Maruna & Copes 2005) supports an approach which encourages offenders to consider why they offended in the 'past' and is therefore contextual so these excuses and reasons are not valid for the future. This approach supports the view that perceived power is very important to desistance. Consequently the offenders' self-narrative can move away from the belief that they are 'doomed to deviance' by simultaneously acknowledging that whilst their 'past' abusive behaviour was problematic they also have the power to be different. This perceived power is realised through the belief that the 'past' behaviour does not reflect the 'real me'. As such, external attributions should not automatically be dismissed as maladaptive. Whilst this is principally a favourable approach, it seems very important to distinguish between different categories of external attributions; for example, those that blame the victim should remain unacceptable, whilst those that recognise the influential factors contributing to the commission of their past offending may be beneficial. It is also important to recognise the controllability of the ascribed attributions because as Ward *et al.* (1998) point out, internal attributions may be more controllable. However, Ajzen (2002) concluded that self-efficacy and controllability, which are the two constructs that Ajzen (2002) regards as making up

perceived behavioural control, could both relate to either internal or external factors. Perceived power in relation to the offenders' attributions should be considered in assessment of the attributions appropriateness.

This is very much in line with Ward and colleagues' (Ward 2002a; Ward & Brown 2004; Ward & Gannon 2006; Ward & Marshall 2004) Good Lives Model of treatment, which considers that offenders are less likely to relapse if they are living fulfilling lives. Furthermore, this model shifts the focus of treatment to skills that enable or empower offenders' ability to live a fulfilling life. Ward and Stewart (2003) suggest that criminogenic needs are internal and external obstacles, which result in basic needs (autonomy, relatedness and competence) not being met leading to an unfulfilling life. This approach to treatment reflects an enhancement model and seeks to empower offenders.

Developing an offender's perceived power to desist should be instilled as a priority at the outset of treatment and the order of different components within the course should be considered carefully. For example, an offender's perceived power to desist should be assessed before moving on to raising empathy awareness or, as Hanson (1997, cited in Ward, Polaschek, & Beech 2006) constructs it, sympathy training. A perceived powerlessness could be counterproductive if an increased awareness elevates offenders' shame and their need to protect themselves from negative evaluation, which may consequently undermine treatment goals. Interestingly, Fisher, Beech and Browne (1998) found that a quarter of offenders blamed the victim more after empathy training, which suggests that raising empathy awareness can be counterproductive unless other factors are also considered. In the current project, perceived power appeared to be the significant factor that implicated the success of treatment.

This theme fits well with recent developments in the sexual offending theory arena, because the Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (ITSO) (Ward & Beech 2006) adopts a more ecological approach to understanding the aetiology of sexual offending, onto which most of the current themes can be mapped. ITSO suggests that sexual offending is dependent on brain development and ecological factors, both proximal and distal, which could be considered to align with vulnerability. The current construction of vulnerability, presented herein, proposes additional factors

relevant to the victim's vulnerability and their environment as well as cultural and societal factors; it seems logical that a child's vulnerability is likely to have a significant impact on an offender's vulnerability to offend/relapse. ITSO recognises that brain development and ecological factors feed into the interlocking neuropsychological functions through biological functioning and social learning. These functions include motivation, regulation, perception and memory, which are also identified as influential in the offenders' self-grooming in the current study. In the ITSO these neuropsychological functions are proposed to manifest as clinical symptoms which, according to the present analysis, could be considered to be a consequence of offenders' self-grooming or grooming shadow where this is relevant (see grooming shadow below for further details). The ITSO then states that a maintenance and escalation cycle is created, which feeds back into an offenders' vulnerability. Again this reflects the concept of the offenders' self-grooming described herein.

### **Entrapment**

The superordinate theme entrapment denotes grooming the child as outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 identified two composite parts of grooming the child – *physical grooming and psychological grooming* – the latter of these appeared to be the most significant factor in determining the child's entrapment. Offenders entrapped their victims in a cycle of abuse and the offenders and survivors identified a number of things that were influential in this process, namely perceived power and attribution, which in turn were affected by the child's awareness and a cost-benefit analysis of the situation.

The current findings highlight that a greater understanding of sexual grooming may be generated by considering the impact of the 'grooming behaviour' rather than focusing on the actions themselves. Whilst the 'actions' that can be observed may differ markedly, the impact of this collective behaviour may be more universal and may therefore aid the identification of vulnerability and potential victims. In this research, a victim's perceived power in relation to the abusive situation was found to have a dual role in their entrapment; victims were either entrapped because of their powerlessness or conversely were entrapped because they wrongly believed that they had some agency in allowing or causing the abuse to happen and thus felt that they were somehow responsible for the abuse and they had failed to stop it. This



tendency to internally attribute the cause of their abuse resulted in further entrapment. When victims internally attributed the cause of their abuse, this had the most detrimental effect because it tended to reinforce their sense of responsibility and perceived power and that there was something about themselves that caused the abuse. However, external attribution for the cause of their abuse reinforced their perceived powerlessness, which again reinforced their entrapment. The direction of victims' attributions appeared to be a significant factor in the continued effects of the abuse and grooming shadow (see below).

In determining their perceived power and attribution, victims' awareness and a cost-benefit analysis of their experiences were influential. The offenders tested their victims to see if they were susceptible to their tactics. Furthermore, the victims considered the pleasure and fear-inducing tactics used by the offenders. The perpetrators' use of force or violence appeared to facilitate external attribution, which is likely to enforce entrapment through increased powerlessness. However, some survivors attributed that the cause was something internal to them. This may be due to the 'over-justification effect' (Deci & Ryan 1985), which emerged from research on motivation and stated that 'in the absence of obvious external determinants of our behaviour, we assume that we freely choose the behaviour because we enjoy it' (Hogg & Vaughan 2005), which suggests a tendency to internalise the cause. It is possible that victims perceived violence or physical force to be a justifiable external determinant of their compliance, but did not recognise the other covert tactics of the offenders to be an equivalent force, thus increasing the likelihood of internalising the cause of their abuse.

Furthermore, all but one of the victim-offenders tended to internally attribute the cause of their abuse and to report their victim experience more positively. This is supported by the 'over-justification' version of the reverse incentive effect, which states that an individual's attitude should change if their compliance and the inducement are not appropriately matched (Freedman, Cunningham, & Krismer 1992). Thus, in this case, compliance that results from what is perceived by the victim to be a small inducement (e.g. bribe vs. physical force) may cause the victim to wrongly assume that they must have chosen to comply because they enjoyed it, which would be compounded further by the bodily responses to sexual stimulation. However, these effects on attribution are speculative.

The importance of attribution and perceived power have been highlighted in dominant models relating to the impact of CSA. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) proposed four traumagenic dynamics: traumatic sexualisation, betrayal, powerlessness and stigmatisation. Summit (1983) reported five categories that result in negative impact: secrecy; helplessness; entrapment and accommodation; delayed, conflicted and unconvincing disclosure; and retraction. Feiring, Taska and Lewis (1996) suggested an extension to Finkelhor and Browne's (1985) model based on the literature on attributions, namely the three dimensions of attribution: internal vs. external, stable vs. unstable, and global vs. specific. Furthermore, unlike Finkelhor and Browne (1985), who identified shame and guilt as primary causes of stigmatisation, Feiring, Taska and Lewis (1996) singled out shame as the most significant factor and emphasised that victims' attributions about the cause of their abuse mediated the development of shame and thus adjustment and stigmatisation. These were all theories based on clinical experience and the available literature.

Coffey *et al.* (1996) conducted a path analysis as a means of testing whether perceived stigma, powerlessness, betrayal or self blame mediated the effects of CSA. They reported that stigma and self blame mediated the psychological distress experienced by women who had been sexually abused in childhood, which provided partial support for Finkelhor and Browne (1985). However, entrapment, as identified herein, highlights the importance of attribution (of which internal attribution is synonymous with self blame), awareness (which may relate to stigma), perceived power and the victim's cost-benefit analysis of the situation. Attribution, perceived power and awareness (as it relates to survivors' search for understanding) continue to be very significant to the grooming shadow (see below for further details), so this thesis concludes that perceived power and awareness are also very important.

Whilst the offenders' tactics were effective at entrapping their victims, the victims' awareness reinforced this entrapment. The victims' level of awareness increased with age and acted like a double-edged sword. On the one hand a victim's lack of awareness made them less likely to intentionally disclose, because they did not know they needed to, but on the other hand when they became aware that there was something to disclose they were simultaneously more aware of many factors relating to the consequences of disclosure and subsequently this increased their

embarrassment, fear and sense of responsibility and thus discouraged their disclosure. Increased awareness is likely to only have a positive effect on disclosure when awareness increases sufficiently to provide a more accurate understanding of an individual's experiences and dispel previously held beliefs.

The finding that older children tend to experience lower self-esteem and self-worth, and more depression, than younger victims (Feiring *et al.* 1996; Tebbutt *et al.* 1997) supports the notion that increased awareness can be detrimental. Furthermore, Celano (1992) suggested a typology of internal attribution of responsibility, which was dependent on age and stage of development, and indicated that victims' internal attributions diversified and increased with age. This highlights the importance of ensuring that young people get sufficient information and understanding to counteract this effect.

Research supports the significance of the apparent cost-benefit analysis. Smallbone and Wortley (2001) found that offenders built the child's trust by spending a lot of time with the child (intra-familial offenders – 71%; extra-familial offenders – 56%), giving them a lot of attention (intra-familial offenders – 64%; extra-familial offenders – 59%) and through non-sexual touching (intra-familial offenders - 67.1% and extra-familial offenders - 64%). They also found that 32% of offenders in the sample relied on the victim not wanting to lose the affection that the offender provided and that 21% of the offenders gave the child special privileges if they remained silent (Smallbone & Wortley 2001). There may also be threats of physical violence. Offenders' threats of violence reinforced the victims' sense of powerlessness; however, violence exhibited by significant adults other than the offender was also very beneficial to the offenders' objectives, which was evident in the superordinate theme vulnerability presented above.

An understanding of entrapment would benefit from drawing on the reciprocity principle, which states that people feel a need to reciprocate favours given by others (Regan 1971), so through a process of desensitisation that utilises the 'foot-in-the-door' tactic offenders succeed in entrapping their victims. The 'foot-in-the-door' tactic involves presenting someone with a small request, for example sitting on the offenders lap or non-sexual touching; compliance with this smaller request increases the likelihood of the individual complying with a later larger request (Freedman &

Fraser 1966). Saks (1978) found that if these requests were appropriately tuned it was possible to get people to donate organs. Thus, by linking together ever-increasing requests it is possible to induce people in to complying with ever-increasing requests. This would be true in relation to parents and caregivers too. Primarily this is what offenders do in the grooming process to entrap their victim.

Regan (1971) also highlighted that guilt produces an increased compliance; this is significant because offenders incite guilt in a victim, for example, when they share with them the consequences of disclosure. Smallbone and Wortley (2001) found that 61% of offenders told their victims that if they disclosed the offender would go to prison. Guilt may also be instilled as a consequence of being made to feel responsible for their abuse and having perceived power in the abusive situation; thus, the product of which is likely to be a cyclical relationship between feeling guilty and increased compliance and increased compliance and increased guilt and so forth.

### **Grooming Shadow**

The above superordinate themes - vulnerability, self-grooming and entrapment – support the definition constructed in Chapter 2, which had been developed following consideration of the available literature. These themes highlight that sexual grooming is about creating the conditions internal and external to the victim and offender that allow the abuse to take place. However, in addition, this research indicated that a victim's experience of sexual grooming left a grooming shadow that continued to have an effect on the individual and thus there was a perpetual effect which continued and was dependent on the extent of recovery - after all, we are products of our experiences and coping with abuse leads to psychological adaptations (Haskell 2007). The survivors' and victim-offenders' grooming shadows reflected their prior experiences of entrapment and the different elements of their vulnerability as children. Ultimately, their grooming shadows were dependent on their search for understanding, perceived power in adulthood, search for safety and acknowledgement of their suffering. These different factors reflect fundamental human needs which are very influential in relation to well-being. The basic needs are relatedness, competence, autonomy (Deci & Ryan 2000), need for meaning and safety (Andersen, Chen, & Carter 2000).

The survivors' grooming shadows fell into three groups. Two survivors perceived themselves to have power and control in their lives and they attributed the cause of their abuse to factors external to themselves. Whilst they reported feelings of worthlessness relating to the past, generally they did not feel this way anymore. Their perceived power seemed to reflect their recognition of powerlessness within their victim experience. The remaining three survivors reported a sense of powerlessness regarding the effects of the past and flashbacks as well as the sense of powerlessness that things would not change. These survivors carried with them a sense of worthlessness which reflected how they felt as victims. Furthermore, two of these survivors continued to internally attribute the cause of their abuse, whilst the third survivor externally attributed the cause of his abuse. The powerlessness experienced by this survivor was not constant and seemed to relate to his experiences of dissociation. Conversely, the victim-offenders continued to attribute the cause of their abuse as something internal to themselves, although it is possible that these attributions have been reconstructed to be offence supportive as part of the grooming process. Furthermore, they tended to report a sense of perceived powerlessness as adults. This powerlessness echoes with their self-grooming (see above), which seems to relate to their propensity to (re)offend. However, two of the victim-offenders eventually recognised their power to manage their risk, which was facilitated by the SOTP. Furthermore, one of these victim-offenders found that accepting his powerlessness as a victim facilitated his recovery and empowered him as an adult.

All survivors and victim-offenders experienced difficulties in relating to others in their adult lives, which naturally impacted on their adult relationships. The most significant and lasting factors affecting their social functioning were difficulties in trusting others and relating to them as equals; this was particularly evident in their dislike of authority. In addition to this general difficulty to relate, the survivors and victim-offenders reported confusion regarding their sexual identity; for some this was to do with their sexual orientation but for others it was to do with their power to choose their own sexual boundaries and their vulnerability to further sexual exploitation. These experiences are consistent with the literature on the impact of CSA on sexuality and interpersonal relationships (Davis & Petretic Jackson 2000).

The presence of difficulties with interpersonal functioning and abuse-related symptomatology amongst survivors of CSA is widely accepted and has been found to be more prevalent in this population compared to their non-abused counterparts. Evidence for this has been found in clinical and community samples (Rumstein-McKean & Hunsley 2001), non-clinical samples (Briere & Runtz 1988) and the results of meta-analyses of studies on the effects of child sexual abuse (Jumper 1995; Oddone Paolucci, Genuis, & Violato 2001), but samples drawn from student populations reported less impairment (Jumper 1995). Fifty-nine percent of a random sample of incarcerated males reported experience of some form of CSA (Johnson *et al.* 2006), which highlights another population overrepresented by CSA victims. This supports the assertion made by one of the survivors, and many of the police officers, that survivors' poor adult functioning, and this research would suggest the detrimental effect of their grooming shadow, is indicated by their overrepresentation in clinical and prison populations.

There is no consensus regarding which abuse characteristics have the most detrimental impact on survivors' psychological adjustment following CSA. One potentially influencing factor is 'relationship to the perpetrator'. A meta-analysis by Tyler in 2002 reported three studies in support and three where no such association was found. A more recent study by Leahy, Pretty and Tenenbaum (2004) found that victims' post-traumatic and dissociative symptomatology positively related to the victims' relationship to the perpetrator, where relationships of trust, guardianship and authority had a more significant impact. However, it was the emotional manipulation that these offenders used rather than the relationship *per se* that was significant; neglect of this factor may explain the above discrepancy. Offenders' emotional manipulation is a significant element of the victims' entrapment as it impacts on perceived power, attribution and cost-benefit analyses. In support of this, the survivors and victim-offenders recalled that mental/emotional abuse had more impact on them long-term. In fact, one survivor reported that it was much easier to get her body back than her head. This association requires further investigation and support, but indicates the relevance of a grooming shadow. Furthermore, Garnefski and Diekstra (1996) reported that male survivors presented substantially more emotional distress and behavioural problems than the female survivors in their sample of 12-19 years. Consideration should be given to possible gender differences

in victims' responses to CSA and thus grooming shadows, which may provide some insight in to why some victims go on to abuse others yet others do not.

All survivors and victim-offenders sought to understand their experiences, whether this was explicit or not; for some victim-offenders their search for understanding was an incidental part of the SOTP, whilst for others it was a deliberate effort similar to that of the survivors and the SOTP facilitated their search. Their recovery was significantly affected by the conclusions drawn from this search for understanding. Individuals were most affected by negative consequences if they attributed the cause of their abuse as internal to themselves. Survivors appeared to show a better degree of recovery if they were able to externally attribute the causes of their abuse, because internal attribution signifies self blame, which is predictive of poor social functioning indicated by higher incidence of depression and low self-esteem (Liem & Boudewyn 1999). Wyatt and Newcomb (1990, cited in Gold, Sinclair, & Balge 1999) supported the view that internal attribution was associated to more negative outcomes for survivors of CSA. Understanding the 'peculiar logic' of their lives was a powerful aid to recovery.

Similarly, Leahy, Pretty and Tenenbaum (2004) found that survivors' search for understanding facilitated recovery; they stated the importance of survivors being helped to understand their abuser's methods and tactics to facilitate understanding and appropriate attribution of responsibility. Likewise, Silver, Boon and Stones (1983, cited in Gold *et al.* 1999) found that women who were able to make sense of their victim experience showed better social adjustment; however, this search for meaning was only adaptive if it led to a better understanding, which highlights the importance of increased public awareness of sexual grooming and, where necessary, professional intervention to help survivors understand the 'peculiar logic' of their lives.

Liem and Boudewyn (1999) concluded that CSA survivors were more likely to develop an attribution style that predisposes them to attribute negative events to internal, stable, global factors and attribute positive events to external factors. However, this was not true for the survivors who externally attributed the cause of their victim experience and who showed relatively better psychological adjustment. Survivors with better psychological adjustment are less likely to be in contact with

clinical or therapeutic services, which serves as a prevalent source of research participants and so this provides one possible explanation for this discrepancy. Furthermore, this pattern is not reflected in the cases of the current sample of child sex offenders, who tended to internally attribute the cause of their victimisation, but, unlike the survivors in Liem and Boudewyn's (1999) sample, they did not internally attribute negative events, because they all externally attributed the cause(s) of their offending<sup>5</sup> (see self-grooming above). Therefore, the pattern and effect of attribution style may be more complex than has been suggested previously; however, for some survivors the pattern will be consistent with the view presented by Liem and Boudewyn (1999).

One factor that appeared to facilitate external attribution of blame was the perpetrators use of physical force or violence. Although Tyler's (2002) review found that the evidence was split on the effect of force on the impact of CSA, with three studies showing evidence for either side, a recent study found that the use of force related to increased perpetrator blame (Feiring & Cleland 2007), which supports the conclusion drawn herein. Furthermore, perpetrator-blame (external) attributions increased with time following disclosure and self-blame (internal) attributions decreased (Feiring & Cleland 2007), which reflects a level of recovery. Notably, this study included children aged 8-15 years who were interviewed within 8 weeks of their disclosure, a year later and again after 6 years. A prompt or early disclosure is likely to indicate a better prognosis for survivors' resilience, because disclosure and discussing CSA is one factor which is more prevalent amongst those who showed better adjustment (Himelein & McElrath 1996). However, there are many more individuals who do not disclose in childhood, which is more descriptive of the current sample, and some never disclose. Therefore, whilst Feiring and Cleland (2007) utilised a very valuable methodology, it must be recognised that their sample was not likely to be representative of all CSA victims and should be interpreted and applied accordingly. It seems likely, given the evidence for the detrimental effect of self-blame/internal attributions for CSA, that internal attributions would be more common in the late or non-disclosure survivors and would remain so *in lieu* of an increased understanding.

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<sup>5</sup> Although for some this changed after the SOTP.



The impact of attribution style is also affected by an individual's perceived power/powerlessness. The two survivors in this study who reported perceived power as adults both believed that they had power outside of their abusive environment for example at school or in the future. Therefore, recognition that their powerlessness was restricted to their victim experience allowed them to perceive their power as adults. In conjunction with external attribution for the cause of their abuse, this combination facilitated the most effective recovery, as was demonstrated by the relative lack of psychological distress and the most successful social functioning.

Conversely, the most negative outcome was associated with survivors or victim-offenders internally attributing the cause of their CSA and a sense that they were responsible or had chosen to be willing participants or, in the case of some of the victim-offenders, reporting positive experiences of their abuse experience. The interaction between attribution and perceived power is significant because a combination of perceived powerlessness as a victim, external attribution for CSA and perceived powerlessness in adulthood due to continued effects of dissociation combined to produce persisting psychological distress. Thus external attribution and perceived power together enabled a positive outcome. However, these different experiences highlight the dynamic nature of power and how its effects can vary in association with attribution for CSA. This conclusion offers one possible explanation for why Coffey *et al.*'s (1996) study, which is mentioned above, did not identify powerlessness as a significant factor in the impact of CSA and later psychological distress. The impact of perceived power on psychological adjustment or distress is not straight forward, because perceived power both at the time of the abuse and as an adult can affect recovery. Furthermore, perceived power is not necessarily a trait that applies equally to all situations in a person's life, nor does it remain unchanged over a lifetime. Further exploration of the effect of perceived power on survivors' and victim-offenders' recovery holds promise for a positive impact on therapeutic approaches.

The survivors' and victim-offenders' grooming shadows were characterised either by a sense of perceived power or a sense of perceived powerlessness, as detailed above. These constructs were characterised by various coping strategies which demonstrated the Grooming Shadow quite clearly; the survivors and victim-offenders explained how as children they had sought safety from their abusive

experiences and how their search for safety as children was reflected in their search for safety as adults in terms of their coping strategies. A number of strategies were described. Escapism was popular and was made up of dissociation, use of drugs and alcohol or choosing to be alone. Other strategies included being in control and finding a voice, so loudness was used as a defence. The final strategy was when individuals viewed the world as a 'dangerous place', which resulted in the decision to hurt others before they could be hurt; this strategy was used by two of the victim-offenders, but none of the survivors or, to view them all as victims/survivors, it was a strategy used by those whose Grooming Shadow led to further abuse, but not by those whose Grooming Shadow led to different outcomes. Perceived power was associated with control as a coping strategy, whilst the other strategies tended to be associated with a perceived powerlessness.

Escapism and avoidant coping predicted distress and thus the most negative outcome (Proulx *et al.* 1995; Wright, Fopma Loy, & Fischer 2005) – whilst power and control are key factors contributing to resilience and few opportunities to exercise power and control is detrimental to well-being (Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson 2001a). Satisfaction of the basic needs - relatedness, competence and autonomy - contributes to a sense of personal control (Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001b cited in Prilleltensky *et al.*, 2001a). Experience of an abusive environment during childhood restricts access to opportunities to meet these needs and to exercise power and control.

It seems important to highlight the significance of 'perceived' power as opposed to 'actual' power; it is not the situations one faces that are important but ones perception relative to these experiences. Carver and Scheier (2000), similarly, questioned whether there is more a need to feel autonomous than to experience true autonomy. The benefits of perceived control along with unrealistic optimism have been shown to be effective as self-enhancing cognitive distortions with benefits on mental health, which is contrary to the common understanding that positive mental health should rely on realistic perception (Himelein & McElrath 1996), but this viewpoint is supported by the experience of the aforementioned survivors who had perceived power as adults.

Recovery, as measured by the extent of psychopathology, was strongly predicted by an individual's 'view of self', in a sample of adults abused as children (either sexually or physically) when combined with other risk factors (Muller & Lemieux 2000). Internal attribution and perceived power relating to their experience of CSA are likely to result in a negative evaluation of 'self'. Notably, Coffey *et al.* (1996) found that survivors' psychological distress in adulthood was mediated by shame and stigma, which are likely to affect the survivors' 'view of self'.

Furthermore, acknowledgement was deemed by some of the current survivors to be a significant factor affecting their recovery and a lack of acknowledgement from significant others seemed to reinforce a survivor's sense of worthlessness. Despite this, social support was not a significant predictor of psychopathology when negative 'view of self' was accounted for (Muller & Lemieux 2000). However, Muller and Lemieux (2000) also found that when a negative 'view of self' coincided with low social support it was then significantly correlated with some measures of psychopathology. Furthermore, secure attachment, which was determined by positive 'view of self', was found to be predictive of a more positive recovery and less psychopathology (McLewin & Muller 2006). Thus, a logical conclusion is that a negative 'view of self' and internal attribution for CSA, perceived powerlessness and lack of acknowledgement/social support are likely to be positively correlated and together bring about a compounded negative effect.

Social comparison is also influential on one's 'view of self'. Wood, Giordano-Beech and Ducharme (1999) demonstrated the importance of social comparison particularly when self-esteem is under threat. This is problematic for victims of CSA as they are often unaware that anyone else shares their suffering; thus, as children they are more likely to be restricted to upward comparisons with people who they deem to be better than them, which may result in negative effects. This may explain the fact that survivors of abuse find it so helpful to know that they are not alone and that they are in a word 'normal' and others have had similar experiences. For victims of abuse, having their experiences and trauma acknowledged is very important and powerful.

The superordinate theme vulnerability, presented above, identified a possible intergenerational transmission of risk between parents who were victims of CSA and their children. For the victim-offenders in this study the link between being a victim

of CSA and the risk to the next generation is direct because these victims became abusers. However, this study also indicated that an intergenerational transmission of risk is more likely to occur as a consequence of the continued vulnerability of survivors and the presence of a detrimental Grooming Shadow.

Links between CSA and revictimisation have been noted (Foa *et al.* 2000; Noll 2005). Survivors' vulnerability to partner violence was affected by psychological difficulties, which followed their experience of childhood trauma, and negative schemas, including guilt and dysfunctional coping. Resilience, on the other hand, was affected by positive schemas relating to a balanced view of the world, perceived control and positive coping (Foa *et al.* 2000). Noll (2005) presented evidence that a persistent cycle of violence against women, beginning in childhood (including sexual abuse) and continuing in to adulthood puts the next generation at risk. Furthermore, partner support was identified as a protective factor in limiting the affect of depressive symptoms on parenting (Wright *et al.* 2005), which is important because CSA tends to have a negative affect on survivors' view of themselves as parents (Banyard 1997). As such, this suggests that the risk to the next generation depends to some degree on the characteristics of the survivor's partner and so this factor can represent vulnerability or protection. Hence a Grooming Shadow dominated by internal attribution for CSA and perceived powerlessness has the potential for increasing a survivor's vulnerability to revictimisation and the vulnerability of the next generation. Further understanding of sexual grooming would benefit from exploring the interaction between attribution and perceived power. A better understanding of this effect could potentially have a significant impact on reducing the next generation's vulnerability.

'View of self' is particularly vulnerable when someone has been subjected to an adverse childhood, because this provides the foundation of knowledge that informs the 'view of self'. The representations of the self reflected back by others have a significant impact on the 'view of self'; this is referred to as the looking glass self (Tice 1992). Furthermore, Tice (1992) concluded that 'the looking glass self may function as a magnifying glass during self-perception, so that what one sees in oneself while others are present has an extra powerful impact on the self-concept'. This new extension to the looking glass self purports that behaviour is more likely to be internalised when it is, or is perceived to be, 'public' as opposed to 'private'.

This is significant for two reasons, firstly, because abuse experiences are effectively made 'public' after disclosure and during the investigation; thus the process of disclosure and investigation may be damaging in and of itself. Secondly, several of the survivors reported that they used to believe that others knew they were victims of CSA without being told, so they may have perceived their victimisation to be public. This is particularly interesting in light of research on the effect of labelling potential for the creation of self-fulfilling prophecies (Holguin & Hansen 2003). Thus, individuals' experiences of how others relate to them are significant in their 'view of self' and later social functioning.

Furthermore, Andersen and Chen (Andersen *et al.* 2000) proposed a social-cognitive model depicting how the self is fundamentally relational and therefore the representation of the self exists in relation to significant others. Consequently, these representations of 'self-with-a-significant other' can implicate how one responds in new interactions through transference of the representation of this 'significant other' (Chen & Andersen 1999); furthermore, this representation of the self is also activated (Hinkley & Andersen 1996), which, for example, may explain an individual's sense of worthlessness or powerlessness relative to other people, because this is how their abuser made them feel. This provides one theoretical framework within which to understand the grooming shadow.

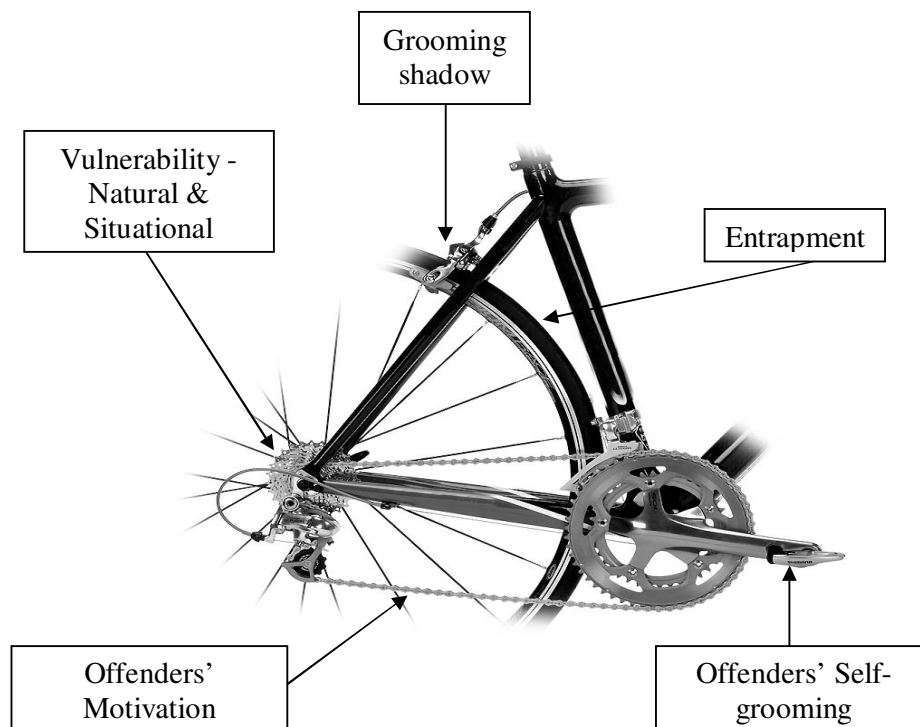
Finally, this discussion has considered the theme grooming shadow at a social, behavioural and cognitive level; however, research has shown that exposure to abusive experiences in childhood can affect brain development due to the stress response and consequently can lead to impaired functioning (Anda *et al.* 2006; Beech & Mitchell 2005; Glaser 2000). As such, it seems plausible that a grooming shadow may also exist at a biological level. Furthermore, consideration of the ITSO (Ward & Beech 2006), which was introduced in the offenders' self-grooming discussion above, is important in relation to understanding the victim-offenders' grooming shadows and how these may impact on their offending. ITSO identified that the aetiology of sexual offending is dependent on biological, ecological, and psychological factors and so it is possible victim-offenders' grooming shadows impact their offending on any or all of these levels.

### The Grooming 'Cycle' & the Grooming Process

Two models are presented to illustrate the experiences of the current sample and the present research findings. These models do not concentrate on what sexual grooming is in a behaviour itinerary sense, i.e. a list of behaviours or visible tactics an offender might use, which was more a function of the literature review in Chapter 2, but rather focuses on how sexual grooming was effective, the factors which determined its success and the mechanisms involved. See Figures 1 and 2 below.

#### The Grooming 'Cycle'

The first model, which is depicted in Figure 1, is suggested as a useful tool to communicate the nature of sexual grooming to a wider non-academic audience, because it utilises a concept that is widely understood in order to expand current knowledge and understanding about sexual grooming through the use of an analogy with the mechanics of cycling. The Grooming 'Cycle' exemplifies how the different facets of the grooming process (vulnerability, offenders' self-grooming, entrapment, and grooming shadow) operate in relation to each other.



**Figure 5 - The Grooming 'Cycle'**

Vulnerability is represented by the cogs in the gearing system, because they account for the differing levels of a child's vulnerability and protection. The smallest cog denotes a child's natural vulnerability, due to age and dependence, and as the cogs get bigger they turn more easily and thus relate to an increased vulnerability. Turning the pedals is analogous to offenders' self grooming, which provides the continued drive to offend. The pedals and the cogs are connected by the bicycle chain, which is symbolic of the offenders' motivation, without which the level of a child's vulnerability is effectively irrelevant because without motivation there will be no offence. The child's entrapment in a cycle of abuse is characterised by the turning of the wheel and even after there is no drive to turn the wheel (i.e. the abuse has stopped) there is still stored momentum, which continues to propel the wheel and keep it turning. This continued motion represents the continued effects of the grooming process and the resultant grooming shadow. The survivors' recovery can be signified by the braking system, which can counteract the negative effects of the grooming process. Furthermore, at the expense of using an old cliché, the offenders will 'never forget how to ride a bike', but instead they can choose not to get on one in the future i.e. they can perceive themselves to have power to desist and manage their risk.

### **The Grooming Process**

The second model (see Figure 2) is a more detailed account of the grooming process based on the accounts of this study's participants. Each of the facets incorporated in the grooming process are depicted in a different colour to identify the groupings of factors associated with the various parts of the process. Victims' level of vulnerability was determined by factors categorised as being influential at a personal, cultural or structural level and more specifically in relation to who was responsible for increasing a child's vulnerability. Additionally, it was noted that offenders' awareness of vulnerability increased a child's vulnerability and conversely parents' lack of awareness increased vulnerability through an intergenerational transmission of risk. Furthermore, it was proposed that increased awareness and vigilance may be a consequence of prior risk of harm. Victims' entrapment was determined by a combination of either the victims' perceived powerlessness as a victim and external attribution for the cause of victimisation or the victims' perceived power as a victim (responsibility).

The victims' cost-benefit analysis of the offenders' pleasure and fear inducing tactics and their level of awareness influences their entrapment, which is perpetuated through a combination of either perceived power or perceived powerlessness as a victim and internal or external attribution for their victimisation. Entrapment was usually enforced, for example, through perceived powerlessness and external attribution or perceived power and internal attribution.

Survivors' recoveries progressed through a search for understanding and acknowledgement. The outcome of this search determined how they continued to perceive their abusive experiences and the subsequent grooming shadow. In the current sample the most detrimental construction involved internal attribution for the cause of their abuse, which tended to be associated with perceived powerlessness as an adult, and often reflected their perceptions as victims. Contrary, the most constructive recovery was related to external attribution for the cause of their abuse and recognition that their powerlessness as a victim was restricted to the victim experience, which allowed them to conceive their perceived power as an adult.

Prior risk of harm, for example childhood abuse or needing to hide one's sexuality, seemed to increase awareness and vigilance of risk. Where this was not the case there was the possibility of an intergenerational transmission of risk through a lack of awareness. Increased awareness and vigilance was either used in a positive way to break the cycle of abuse or it facilitated the offenders' self-grooming and increased potential victims' vulnerability. Offenders' self grooming was generally characterised by external attribution for offending and a perceived powerlessness to desist, especially prior to treatment. The best prediction of abstinence from offending, and risk management, appeared to involve internal attribution for offending, in terms of accepting responsibility of their past offending, whilst also recognising the influence of external factors. However the determining factor appeared to be perceived power to desist, because internalisation of being a sex offender appeared to be very detrimental in the absence of this perceived power to desist and manage one's risk. Offenders' perceived power and attribution for offending impacted on the victims' vulnerability and entrapment through the





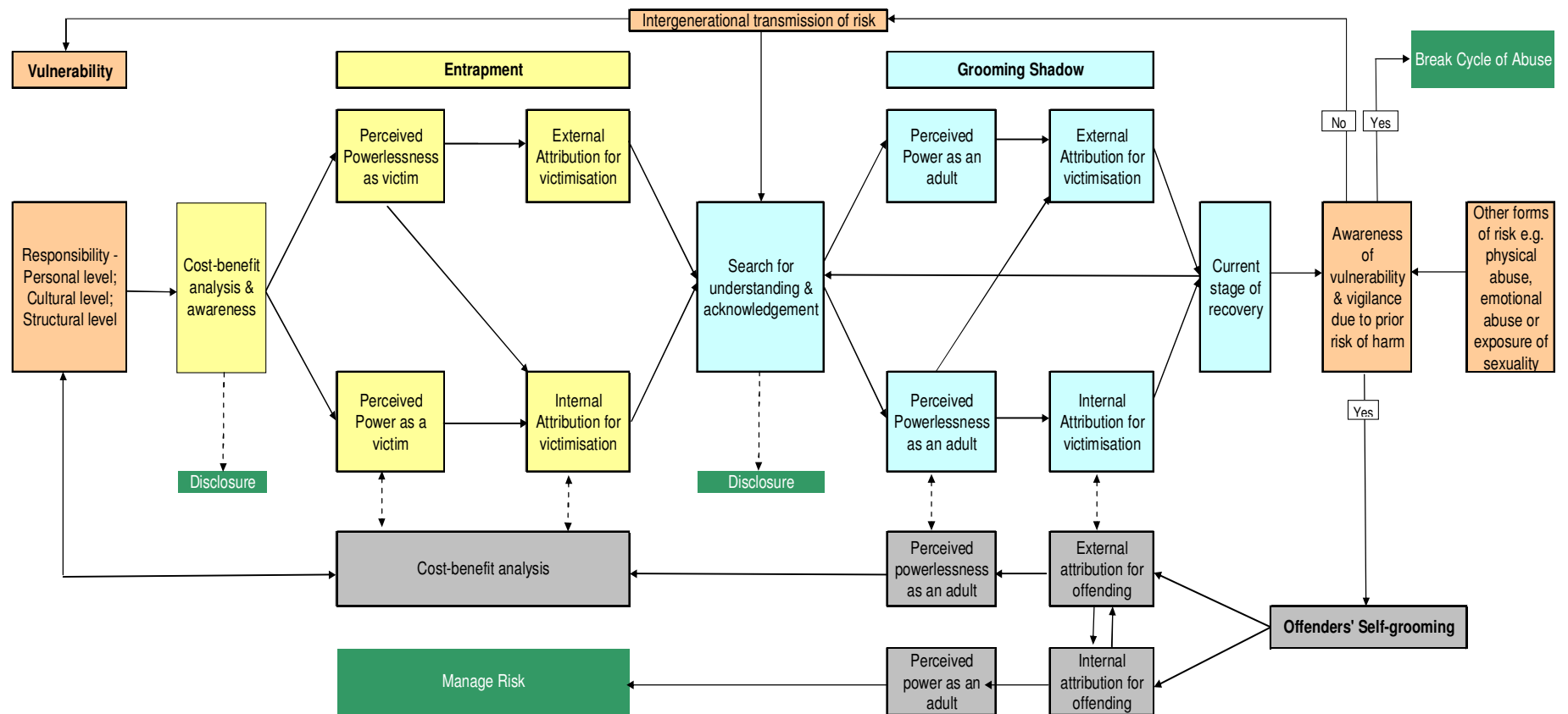


Figure 6 - The Grooming Process

offenders' motivation and cost-benefit analysis respectively. Furthermore, victim-offenders' self-grooming appeared to mirror their grooming shadow, which tended to involve a perceived powerlessness as adults and internal attribution for their victim experience. Their perceived powerlessness was inversely related to their perceived power as victims, which reflected their perception of responsibility and agency in their abuse.

### **Evaluation**

The suitability of a model needs to be checked against its ability to account for the phenomenon for which it intended to explain. By looking at this phenomenon through a wider lens it has been possible to see sexual grooming as a dynamic, ongoing experience dependent on multiple factors and not a finite process solely influenced by the offenders and ending when the actual sexual abuse ends. Furthermore, this model can account for situational and preferential offenders, extra-familial and intra-familial offences, continued grooming over long periods of time and the observation that offenders create their own opportunities to offend, including their different types of planning, both implicit and explicit. It is important that the models can account for these different typologies and classifications of offenders because these categories are not mutually exclusive (Itzin 2001). Furthermore, like the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente 1982) the models consider the whole journey of sexual grooming, and allowed an ecological view, which takes account of the intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental, and societal influence on the sexual grooming process, including the interrelationship between these factors.

The current research findings are compatible with the literature review provided in Chapter 2 and as such the definition developed during that process remains adequate. However, it can be improved by including reference to the existence of a grooming shadow. Therefore, a new definition for sexual grooming is now provided.

- Sexual grooming is a process by which a person or person(s) prepare a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. The impact of this

process exists long after the actual abuse, can affect a child's recovery and it serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying of their actions.

Gaining this perspective of how people experience sexual grooming is particularly important because sexual grooming can not be understood independently of the context in which it occurs, since its function is situational. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis allowed exploration of the associated dynamics because of its interpretative and phenomenological nature. Methodologies that restrict analysis to the language used would have failed to achieve this. Whilst grounded theory was considered as an appropriate methodology it did not offer the interpretative value of IPA.

The nature of qualitative research and small sample sizes restricts the generalisability of research findings. As such, the current findings and models are presented as representative of the current sample and not of a wider population. However, it is suggested that by seeking the individual you get closer to the universal (Smith 2004); therefore, this study presents a valuable contribution to current understanding of sexual grooming and warrants further study to replicate and test the findings of this research on larger samples to test their empirical value. Consequently, it may be shown that the current models have the ability to explain behaviour beyond the original scope of this study.

Credibility checks were incorporated into the design of this study as means of indicating quality. The reader is able to judge the quality of the analysis themselves because generous amounts of interview data have been provided to illustrate findings. In addition to the early analysis being conducted in collaboration with two peer researchers, this research has been subject to peer review through the publication of Chapter 2 and 3, supervision from three psychologists with experience in forensic and clinical psychology, and at conferences where the literature reviews and the analysis have been presented in their evolving forms. The research was met with a positive response with people looking forward to the published papers. Feedback was sought from one police officer and two survivors. Unfortunately,

feedback from the prison psychologist, which had been anticipated, has not been possible at the current time due to circumstances beyond my control.

The feedback was positive and encouraging. The two models developed from the current analysis provided the focus of discussion. The Grooming 'Cycle' was particularly successful because it provides a potential tool for professionals to use in explaining the grooming process to families that they are involved with. The survivors were keen about the potential of The Grooming 'Cycle' to form the basis of a leaflet to educate the general public and one of these survivors was also eager to help with the graphics in the leaflet. The police officer also emphasised the importance of survivors taking positive action through disclosure and I explained how this was incorporated in the two models and he was very pleased. The survivors were reassured that the models took account of the role of significant others in making them vulnerable to CSA.

The police officer rightly identified that The Grooming Process was very complicated, but he also acknowledged that this was inevitable considering the complexity of the phenomenon. However, I explained how the framework may be used in practice to outline the process as it was relevant to an individual rather than including all the different possible elements. The police officer also acknowledged that the biggest attribute of this research was the consideration of multiple perspectives. He suggested that inclusion of further perspectives, for example social workers, would add further depth to our understanding. After this meeting it seemed apparent that the inclusion of the police officers' perspective was really important to a sense of ownership and thus their receptivity to the ideas portrayed in this research. This may also be true for other professionals. Consequently, this kind of participation may prove to be vital in the attempt to bridge the gap between research and practice.

It is important to consider how the current study was affected by the characteristics of the samples included. As mentioned previously, the survivors and victim-offenders interviewed for the current study had not disclosed their abuse as children. Retrospective data, such as this, can be affected by accuracy of recall as can whether

individuals have received therapy or not. Generally the benefits of accessing this kind of data outweighs the possible issues, as long this is factored in to the interpretation of the findings. Therefore, in the current study, it is important to note that individual accounts of their CSA experience may have been affected by later processing and memory reconstruction, but without a baseline account it is impossible to be sure.

The accuracy of retrospective data has traditionally been questioned because of the potential for recall errors as the time between the event and recall increased. There has been some controversy about 'false memories' for CSA; nonetheless, most people who were abused as children have a continuous memory of these experiences, but some individuals do not remember until later on in adulthood (Dale & Allen 1998). There is a danger that controversy surrounding supposedly 'false memories' of CSA can lead to public scepticism (Dale & Allen 1998). However, Brewin, Andrews and Gotlib (1993) concluded that the claims asserting that retrospective reports are generally unreliable are exaggerated and that there is no reason to suggest a link between psychopathology and poor recall of early experiences. To maximise the accuracy of recall the interviewees in the current sample were first of all asked a question that initiated free recall and then the participants were guided to recall events predominantly in a chronological order.

The current research considered participants' retrospective accounts to be a valuable resource for exploring experiences of sexual grooming. Conversely, interviewing individuals soon after disclosure would not have allowed a consideration of the whole grooming process including the continued effects in the form of the grooming shadow and offenders' self-grooming. Widom and Morris (1997) found that men were more likely to give a false-negative report regarding their prior history of CSA, despite official records validating that they had been sexually abused. This may be more to do with denial and a deliberate choice not to disclose rather than poor memory. Women's retrospective self report measures were predictive of prior CSA experiences. Therefore the accuracy of disclosure is likely to be affected by the interviewees' motivation to disclose. Issues of non-disclosure were not considered to be a factor in this study because the current sample was well motivated to

remember and readily provided accounts of their experiences. However, as a consequence, this sample only included individuals who had disclosed their abuse, if not officially then at least to someone, and by implication this means that individuals that have never disclosed were excluded from this study. Furthermore, this sample did not include individuals that disclosed their abuse as a child and subsequently received appropriate help and support. Future research should include consideration of these groups.

The current findings require validation through further investigation of the current conclusions. In a recent longitudinal study, Feiring and Cleland (2007) found that perpetrator-blame increased over time whilst self-blame reduced, based on a comparison with measures taken shortly after disclosure in childhood. However, the current sample would be considered to be late or non-disclosers (at least in an official sense) and the pattern of attributions appear to be more complicated. Future research could employ a longitudinal design, similar to that of Feiring and Cleland (2007), which would allow investigation of victims' experience of sexual grooming shortly after disclosure, including measuring their attributions and perceived power in relation to their experiences, and at various points thereafter. A sample should include individuals disclosing in childhood, but also late or non-disclosers; alternatively, a similar design could be used pre and post-therapy. This would allow a test of the validity of the retrospective data or memory of events and it would also show any changes in attribution and perceived power over time, and possibly as a consequence of therapy, which would contribute to our understanding of these constructs in The Grooming Process and offer potential insights for therapeutic services.

It could be argued that the sample may be biased because most of the survivors and victim-offenders experienced multiple forms of abuse; however, Dong *et al.* (2003) found that CSA was strongly associated with experiencing multiple forms of adverse childhood experiences; an association that increased relative to the severity of the CSA. This finding is supported by Peleikis, Mykletum and Dahl (2004) in their sample of female CSA survivors being treated for anxiety disorders and/or depression. Liem and Boudewyn (1999) found that maltreatment and loss in

childhood predicted higher frequency of CSA, which supports the above argument that CSA and other forms of maltreatment often co-exist. In fact, 75% of Daigneault, Tourigny and Hébert's (2006) sample reported further abuse and neglect in addition to CSA. Therefore the experience of multiple forms of abuse in the current sample seems to reflect a 'normal' pattern of co-morbidity.

The sample of offenders is taken from a prison population and thus consisted of predominantly convicted offenders, who were post-treatment, apart from one self-confessed offender. Pre-treatment, offenders are unlikely to accept full responsibility for their offending and thus present more of a challenge. The analysis would most likely be dominated with themes relating to denial and the pending trial. However, this would be important in relation to their perceptions and thus significant in understanding their constructions of their experiences. It would be interesting to explore child sex offenders' perceived power and attributions about their offending and power to desist, and victim experience where relevant, pre and post-treatment to assess the contribution of the SOTP on these constructs, but also to consider the effect of prior attributions and perceived power on the efficacy of the SOTP and later relapse or desistence. This would give a clearer picture of how these issues affected their offending.

The police officers' accounts often provided confirmation of what the survivors and victim-offenders said, based on their general experience and numerous case examples. They confirmed much that was reported by the other participants and expanded the vulnerability theme to include a more ecological construction of vulnerability. However it was noticeable that the police officers with longer service and thus more experience provided a richer source of data; however, the least experience officers were interviewed first, so it may be that the difference of richness in data was affected by the interviewer. In hindsight, it may have been more beneficial to interview the police officers later in the research process, post analysis and model construction in order to employ their services to assess the value of my analysis in relation to their experience. It was possible to speak to one of the police officers in relation to the current analysis and the two models, as part of the credibility checks (see above). Unfortunately, it was not possible to speak to the



other police officers who had participated, because many of them had moved on to new posts outside of the department and those who remained have significant time pressures related to their work. Future plans to disseminate research findings will provide a further opportunity for peer review and quality checks.

Of course many other people are involved in the grooming process, such as parents, siblings, other relatives and social workers also play an important role in the identification of and response to sexual grooming. A similar study to this one widening the selection of participants to include these other perspectives would provide additional beneficial insight – particularly in relation to understanding the role of significant others in the level of children’s vulnerability. Furthermore, future research could involve a case study of an offender, victim, significant adults and authorities relating to one particular abusive situation.

### **Prevention**

The literature review in Chapter 3 supported a case for applying a public health approach to preventing sexual offending. The construction of sexual grooming, as presented in this thesis, deems the grooming process to involve the victim, the offender, their families, the community, relevant authorities, policy and resources. Furthermore, individuals’ present and future understanding of their experiences of sexual grooming was influenced by their past and present understandings of these experiences. A public health approach would involve everyone taking responsibility for the existence of CSA and acknowledging their role in prevention. This approach identifies three levels of intervention: primary prevention, which targets everyone; secondary prevention, which targets those at risk of abuse or at risk of offending, and; tertiary, which is a reactive approach attempting to prevent future offending or revictimisation. These are discussed in more detail below.

#### **Primary**

Primary prevention involves a universal approach, which targets the whole of society without distinction. At this level, widespread efforts are required to raise public awareness to enable identification of risk, in order to provide early intervention and

appropriate responses to victims and offenders, as well as reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience. The influential and dual role of awareness within the grooming process requires that the awareness of children and young people is raised too. Furthermore, it is important that this awareness is sufficiently comprehensive and supportive enough to combat the double-bind of awareness discussed above. Further research is required to understand children's awareness capabilities and comprehension, in order to inform how and when this is possible and also what 'messages' should be given to children and at what ages. Raising public awareness is needed to dispel the myths that saturate common understanding about CSA and child sex offenders, which in turn determine society's response to victims and offenders.

Public responses to CSA and indeed the personal responses and expectations of victims' families, teachers and other professionals can have a significant impact on the outcomes for victims of CSA and their recovery (Kouyoumdjian, Perry, & Hansen 2005). Furthermore, the impact of being labelled a CSA victim can lead to expectations of a negative outcome (Holguin & Hansen 2003). Greater public awareness should work to counteract this fallacy and allow individuals to be active in creating their own futures. Similarly, the universal hatred of child sex offenders, based on a demonised view of such individuals, can lead to vigilante behaviour which subsequently can drive offenders underground and increase their risk of offending. A greater, more sensitive, understanding of CSA and its cyclical nature within the general public might reduce the stigma associated with being a victim of CSA and facilitate the belief that sex offenders can change and are not stereotypical 'monsters', but could be anyone. It is essential to move away from scaremongery and moral panic that has dominated public discourses in the past.

The Grooming 'Cycle' provides a means of communicating the complexity of sexual grooming to a non-academic audience through the use of an analogy with cycling, which is widely understood, and would therefore be a useful resource to increase public awareness. The Grooming 'Cycle' would communicate well in the form of a leaflet for general distribution, with a specific targeting of parents and professionals that have regular contact with children. In addition to this model, The Grooming

Process could be used to inform professionals that work with children, survivors (which would include any health or social care professionals) or offenders. Both of these models can be used to increase the understanding of sexual grooming in these populations and a better understanding of how sexual grooming impacts an individual is likely to facilitate a more informed understanding about why individuals think and behave the way they do and thus encourage a more sensitive response. Thus, a better understanding at this universal level has the potential for reducing stigma associated with CSA and may facilitate interventions at the secondary and tertiary levels. The success of interventions at the primary level is determined by the provision of appropriate resources, policies and political/police targets, i.e. that place crimes against children as a priority and which then act as an effective deterrent by increasing convictions.

## **Secondary**

Secondary level intervention targets individuals who are at risk of offending and also children who are at risk of victimisation. Services such as Childline, which provides a helpline for children who are being abused, a helpline run by the NSPCC for parents or adults who are concerned for a child, and more recently innovative programmes that target offenders or potential offenders that have been set up by Stop it Now and Circles UK (see Chapter 3 for more details), are good examples of ways that allow individuals to seek help when they or someone they know are at risk. Prevention at this level requires the availability of resources and services to identify and respond to individuals who are at risk.

However, there is a moral dilemma because a move towards more preventative approaches to CSA may remove resources from reactive services, which are already scarce. An analogy was used at the Stop it Now conference in 2004 (Rosenberg 2004) to illustrate this moral dilemma. A scenario was described of a couple sat by a river having a picnic when they saw a body floating down the river, so they pulled the body out, resuscitated the person and sent them to hospital. They then returned to their picnic until the scene repeated itself and they reacted as they had before, but this scenario continued to repeat itself. Eventually, after another body was spotted in the river, instead of heading towards the riverbank, one of the people headed

upstream. Their partner asked where they were going and they explained that they were going to go and find out who was throwing the bodies in to the river in the first place. The analogy was used to demonstrate the importance of a preventative approach rather than just a reactive approach. However, the current analysis provides an alternative view.

The issue, as stated in the scenario above, is that by heading up stream bodies coming down stream may be overlooked. However, to borrow this analogy, it seems that a reactive approach can also be a preventative approach, because it is possible to find out who was throwing the bodies in the river by asking the rescued people, which then allows you to take preventative action. The presence of a possible intergenerational transmission of risk suggests that by responding appropriately to survivors of CSA, including victim-offenders, it is possible to be both reactive and preventative. Hamilton and Browne (1998:58) state that offenders select the children most vulnerable to their tactics and who are unlikely to disclose the abuse, and 'it is, therefore, the moral responsibility of professionals, and indeed society as a whole, to recognize and help empower these vulnerable children before offenders take advantage of their vulnerability'. This is not intended to support a mother-blaming discourse, but instead recognises the protective role of parents, who are much more able to fulfil this role when they have had help to deal with their past and the effects of a grooming shadow. As such, it is my opinion that the moral obligation stated by Hamilton and Browne (1998) should extend to include a moral obligation to respond effectively to survivors of CSA, for their own sake, but also for the sake of their children, because despite CSA being identified as playing a significant role in parenting skills this has not been a target of intervention (Cross 2001). Hooper and Koprowska (2004) reported that the sequel of CSA is compounded by agencies failing to provide adequate support in response to survivors' early experiences of victimisation and subsequent mental health problems. This highlights the need for society to accept responsibility for CSA and to respond appropriately (Laws 2000).

The Grooming 'Cycle' could be used, at this level, to inform parents with children who are particularly vulnerable, including helping parents recognise where they may increase a child's vulnerability and conversely how to increase a child's resilience.

Furthermore, for parents who are themselves survivors of CSA, this model may be used to help them recognise the existence of their own Grooming Shadow and how this may be affecting their life and to seek assistance with their recovery where necessary. However, this relies on the availability of services for survivors, which in actual fact are very sparse.

Equally, therapy is not the only method for a preventative approach. Prilleltensky, Nelson and Peirson (2001a) advocate the value of an ecological approach which considers the whole person and the systems in which they live. Therefore, increasing supportive relationships outside of the family are associated with increased resilience through increased self-esteem and self-efficacy (Prilleltensky *et al.* 2001a), which could be of significant value for children and parents. Furthermore, access to resources is a prerequisite to experiencing power and control (Prilleltensky *et al.* 2001a), which are significant in relation to a survivors' perceived power. Therefore, a preventative approach can focus not only on the potential victim but also on reducing the vulnerability in their environment and attending to the needs of the child's caregiver(s) by adopting an ecological approach.

### **Tertiary**

The provision of therapy, treatment or other intervention is a tertiary level approach and is relevant to both offenders and survivors of CSA. However, Kaufman (2005) reported that for every £1 spent on treatment for offenders only 1p is spent on victims. So this level of intervention already receives the most financial input, but only in relation to treatment of sex offenders. It is important that such interventions pay attention to offenders attribution for their offending and their perceived power to manage risk and furthermore consideration of their attributions for their own abuse and perceived power in relation to their victim experience, where relevant, because of the apparent connection between their perceptions of their own abuse and their perceived powerlessness to manage their risk. This is supported by the ecological approach of recent theorising about sexual offending in the form of the Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (Ward & Beech 2006).

The importance of attribution and perceived power in survivors' and victim-offenders' recoveries from CSA supports the use of therapies that facilitate individuals reconceptualising their experiences and changing the way they perceive themselves. The Grooming Process could be used as a framework for understanding people's experiences and constructions about their abuse, which can then be used to guide therapeutic intervention. Furthermore, The Grooming 'Cycle' can be used to help victims, survivors and parents to understand the tactics of offenders after abuse has occurred, in order to avoid revictimisation. With regard to offenders, The Grooming Process can be used in a piece-meal way in sex offender treatment, but care should be taken to avoid educating the offenders further about the grooming process, so intervention should be restricted to reconstructing the grooming process as it was relevant to their offence(s) or, in the case of victim-offenders, their experience of being a victim of CSA.

Self-reconstruction has been found to have significant therapeutic benefit. For example, Van Vliet (2008) found that self-reconstruction determined how individuals, who had experienced shame in adulthood, 'bounced' back. In addition, positive reframing has been associated with better adjustment in survivors of CSA (Himelein & McElrath 1996). It is possible to reconstruct the past and the future in the present (Johnson & Sherman 1990), which enables this approach to be used to counteract the previous unhelpful and misinformed learning from the past, which in turn is likely to lead to changed perspective for the future. It is therefore feasible for survivors or victim-offenders to reconstruct the internal attributions for their abuse and to alternatively recognise appropriate external attributions for their experiences. Furthermore, survivors and victim-offenders can learn to appreciate the power that their abuser had over them and thus retrospectively acknowledge their powerlessness as victims, whilst also identifying that their powerlessness was specific to that situation, which should enable them to perceive the power they have as adults. Similarly, for offenders the positive benefits of internal and external attribution need to be incorporated into treatment along with the recognition of the important role of perceived power to desist, which needs to be encouraged as a primary goal of treatment.

The benefits of reconstructing memories, perceptions and concepts of 'self' fit well with narrative therapy and its focus on identifying the dominant 'view of self', as determined by the individual's own perceptions, those of significant others and society generally, which together construct a dominant story for one's life. Narrative therapy facilitates the development of an alternative story (Slonim-Nevo & Lander 2008). Furthermore, these methods of therapy should facilitate survivors need for meaning (Andersen *et al.* 2000), which is essential to effective recovery (Leahy *et al.* 2004).

The impetus for this research was provided by the introduction of the new legislation on sexual grooming, in the form of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Home Office 2003), and so this discussion will draw to a close with a review of this legislation in light of the current findings. Considering the current participants' experiences of sexual grooming, it is hard to see, even knowing that a child is being abused, how this legislation could be used in these instances to stop abuse. Legislation provides important powers to respond to abuse, and it does have the potential to act as a deterrent, but these powers alone are unlikely to result in effective prevention. Therefore, a legislative response can contribute to a broader public health approach, as discussed above, however it should not be relied upon as the definitive solution to CSA.

## **Chapter 10 - Conclusion**

This research project set out to deconstruct different perspectives of sexual grooming, in order to develop a greater understanding of this phenomenon and ultimately to contribute to future improvements in child protection. This is a timely piece of research especially considering the high profile nature of sexual grooming, not least because of the recent changes to legislation to include an offence and a civil order specifically targeting sexual grooming. Furthermore, this area of research has previously been under-developed and so this study offers new insights in to the mechanisms of sexual grooming success. First of all it pulled together the existing literature, which demonstrated the lack of clarity surrounding this phenomenon and consequently the lack of an appropriate definition. Consequently, a new definition was proposed based on these findings, which was subsequently revised to include further facets of sexual grooming identified during the current explorative research.

The lack of clarity surrounding sexual grooming was similarly reflected in the new legislation introduced to respond to this phenomenon. However, despite being proposed as a preventative measure, in reality, its scope is much more limited, which has been reflected in its lack of application. This research concludes that a purely legislative response is not effective and instead supports a public health approach, which requires a universal preventative response (primary), a vulnerability targeted preventative response (secondary) and a reactive investigative, therapeutic and treatment response (tertiary).

Analysis of the adult survivors', child sex offenders' and police officers' experiences of sexual grooming revealed three themes - vulnerability, entrapment and offenders' self-grooming - which largely reflect the facets of sexual grooming already identified during the literature review. However, the current analysis expands our understanding about the complexity of sexual grooming. Whilst all children have a natural vulnerability, it was the environment in which they lived and the action and inaction of significant others, that determined the level of a child's vulnerability. These actions were sometimes deliberate and other times inadvertent. Vulnerability, subsequently, impacted on a child's entrapment, but this was further enforced



through the process of their cost-benefit analysis of the fear and pleasure inducing tactics of the offender, but was also significantly affected the child's awareness, because awareness acted as a double-edged sword – too little awareness reduced the likelihood of a deliberate disclosure and some, but not enough, led to avoiding disclosure, due to increased embarrassment and fear of the consequences. Offenders' self-grooming also involved a cost-benefit analysis, which was based on their desires and the risk of disclosure.

Understanding about sexual grooming was extended further through an acknowledgment that it is a dynamic process with no definitive end. This was evident by the presence of a temporal link between experiences of sexual grooming in childhood and continued effects in adulthood, which formed a kind of grooming shadow, which represents the fourth theme. A similar influence was apparent in the offenders' self-grooming, especially offenders who had also been victims of child sexual abuse. These findings have been developed in to two models, the first is The Grooming 'Cycle', which is designed to inform a wider non-academic population and the second is a more detailed model of The Grooming Process.

The success of sexual grooming appeared to be as a consequence of an individual's attribution for their experiences and their perceived power in relation to their life experiences, both of which perpetuated a child's entrapment, offenders' self-grooming and survivors' grooming shadow. Attributions were either internal or external to the person, but there was not a linear relationship between the two. Similarly, an individual either perceived themselves to have power or to be powerless, and again this was not linear. Furthermore, the current analysis indicated that there was an interaction between these perceived power and attribution.

There appeared to be number of dominate patterns of experience implicated by attribution and perceived power. Generally, internal attribution for childhood sexual abuse has a negative impact on later functioning. This pattern was true for the survivors who continued to experience the most detrimental grooming shadow and this pattern was also evident in the accounts of offenders, who had also been victims. Internal attribution was associated with perceived powerlessness as adults.

Moreover, these two groups of individuals were more likely to believe that, as a child, they had power and agency regarding their victim experiences.

The survivors with the seemingly best recovery externally attributed the cause for their abuse, recognised the relative powerlessness of their victim experience and subsequently perceive themselves to have power in adulthood. This was facilitated by their appreciation during childhood that their perceived powerlessness was restricted to the abusive experience and that they did have power elsewhere. There was, however, one survivor who externally attributed the cause of his abuse, but continued to perceive a sense of powerlessness in adulthood because of a continued experience of dissociation.

Similar complexity was noted in the relationship between attributions and perceived power in relation to offenders own offending behaviour. All offenders perceived themselves to be powerless at the time of their offending and externally attributed the causes for their crimes. However, one offender also internalised that he was a sex offender, which in combination with a perceived powerlessness is dangerous. Conversely, when offenders accepted responsibility for their offending and internally attributed the cause, whilst also recognising the external influences, and also perceived themselves to have the power to desist they had a much more positive response to treatment and higher likelihood of abstaining from relapse. Many of the offenders continued to externally attribute the cause of their offending and failed to recognise their power to desist.

The findings from this study are based on a very small sample and therefore require further empirical support. However, they offer a deeper understanding of ‘how’ and ‘why’ sexual grooming is successful, which can be disseminated to professionals and the public in order to contribute to a primary level public health approach to child abuse prevention. The Grooming ‘Cycle’ offers a unique opportunity to communicate the complexities of sexual grooming through an analogy with a concept that is widely understood; this may also be useful at secondary and tertiary level provision. General awareness of sexual grooming should improve individuals’ ability to identify it and respond appropriately, increase victims’ likelihood of

disclosure, help potential offenders ask for help before they commit an offence and encourage survivors of child sexual abuse to seek help with recovery where necessary.

A better understanding of sexual grooming by professionals means that secondary prevention can be more effective at identifying vulnerability; thus enabling the provision of support and services to better protect these children. It has also been argued that a reactive response to survivors can be a preventative approach regarding their own children and future generations. The Grooming Process provides targets for tertiary level responses in treatment and therapy for offenders and survivors. Furthermore, The Grooming Process offers a framework within which to understand individuals' experiences and subsequently to help them understand the 'peculiar logic' of their lives. The search for understanding was the prominent method of recovery for survivors and offenders. However, this is all dependent on services being available.

A concerted effort is needed to continue work on understanding sexual grooming, but as with the legislative response, an increased understanding alone is not going to eradicate child sexual abuse. An appropriate response requires a collaborative approach that places child protection as a priority and where child abuse is recognised as everyone's business (*Every child matters* 2003; Laws 2000; The Lord Laming 2009).

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 – Preliminary Analysis at the group level**

Please refer to CD attached to the inside the back cover of this thesis.

## **Appendix 2 - Information sheet for adults survivors**

### **Information Sheet**

As a research student at Coventry University I am investigating 'What is sexual grooming?' This research will form part of my thesis and will be submitted for publication. I would like to invite you to take part in this research by participating in an interview with me. This would involve you sharing your experience and understanding of sexual grooming with me. My aim is to look at different perspectives and experiences of sexual grooming to ascertain a better understanding of the phenomenon. I hope this will be useful in future attempts to protect children from harm. I will keep you informed of my intentions and purpose of the study.

The British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines will be followed throughout this study to maintain ethical working practice. These guidelines require that informed consent is received from each participant. If you consent to take part please sign the attached consent form. Please rest assured that all information is confidential and that to everyone except myself you will be anonymous through the substitution of your name with a pseudonym. I wish to inform you that if a previously undisclosed incident is divulged that highlights harm to yourself or others in the past, present, or future, I may need to share this information with a relevant agency, but I will discuss this with you before taking further action.

You have the right to withdraw at anytime, whether this is before, during or after the interview. For this purpose, I will keep a record of your pseudonym and real name to allow for the identification and removal of your interview transcript, if necessary. However, I stress that this record will be stored separately to your anonymised interview transcript, and only I will have the facility to marry up the two. On completion of my PhD study, this record will be destroyed, along with the tape-recording of your interview. Anonymised transcripts will be kept for two years after completion to allow for further publications.

Your comfort is paramount. I will make every attempt to limit any distress apparent during the interview. The interview and topic under discussion is very sensitive, and I therefore advise that you consider arranging access to someone who can provide you with the help and support you may need after the interview. I am not qualified to offer counselling, but I have a list of helpline numbers, which may be of use.

If you need to contact me for any reason, my contact details are as follows.

Many Thanks

Samantha Craven

Tel: 02476 887048

Email: s.craven@coventry.ac.uk

### **Appendix 3 – Information sheet for police officers**

#### **Information Sheet**

As a research student at Coventry University I am investigating ‘What is sexual grooming?’ This research will form part of my thesis and will be submitted for publication. I would like to invite you to take part in this research by participating in an interview with me. This would involve you sharing your experience and understanding of sexual grooming with me. My aim is to look at different perspectives and experiences of sexual grooming to ascertain a better understanding of the phenomenon. I hope this will be useful in future attempts to protect children from harm. I will keep you informed of my intentions and purpose of the study.

The British Psychological Society’s ethical guidelines will be followed throughout this study to maintain ethical working practice. These guidelines require that informed consent is received from each participant. If you consent to take part please sign the attached consent form. Please rest assured that all information is confidential and that to everyone except myself you will be anonymous through the substitution of your name with a pseudonym. I wish to inform you that if a previously undisclosed incident is divulged that highlights harm to yourself or others in the past, present, or future, I may need to share this information with a relevant agency, but I will discuss this with you before taking further action.

You have the right to withdraw at anytime, whether this is before, during or after the interview. For this purpose, I will keep a record of your pseudonym and real name to allow for the identification and removal of your interview transcript, if necessary. However, I stress that this record will be stored separately to your anonymised interview transcript, and only I will have the facility to marry up the two. On completion of my PhD study, this record will be destroyed, along with the tape-recording of your interview. Anonymised transcripts will be kept for two years after completion to allow for further publications.

Your comfort is paramount. I will make every attempt to limit any distress apparent during the interview. The interview and topic under discussion is very sensitive, and I therefore advise that you consider arranging access to someone who can provide you with the help and support you may need after the interview. I am not qualified to offer counselling, but I have a list of helpline numbers, which may be of use. Alternatively, counselling is available through the institution in which you work.

If you need to contact me for any reason, my contact details are as follows.

Many Thanks

Samantha Craven      Tel: 02476 887048  
Email: s.craven@coventry.ac.uk



## **Appendix 4 – Information sheet for child sex offenders**

### **Information Sheet**

As a research student at Coventry University I am investigating ‘What is sexual grooming?’ This research will form part of my thesis and will be submitted for publication. I would like to invite you to take part in this research by participating in an interview with me. This would involve you sharing your experience and understanding of sexual grooming with me. My aim is to look at different perspectives and experiences of sexual grooming to ascertain a better understanding of the phenomenon. I hope this will be useful in future attempts to protect children from harm and to intervene earlier in the offending process. I will keep you informed of my intentions and purpose of the study.

The British Psychological Society’s ethical guidelines will be followed throughout this study to maintain ethical working practice. These guidelines require that informed consent is received from each participant. If you consent to take part please sign the attached consent form. Please rest assured that all information is confidential and that to everyone except myself you will be anonymous through the substitution of your name with a pseudonym. Only I will listen to the interview in full and Alison Little will listen to it in part in order to satisfy security clearance. I wish to inform you that if a previously undisclosed incident is divulged that highlights harm to yourself or others in the past, present, or future; this includes any risk to security. I may need to share this information with a relevant agency, but I will discuss this with you before taking further action.

You have the right to withdraw at anytime, whether this is before, during or after the interview. Although, it is not possible to withdraw after the research has been published. For this purpose, I will keep a record of your pseudonym and real name to allow for the identification and removal of your interview transcript if necessary. However, I stress that this record will be stored separately to your anonymised interview transcript, and only I will have the facility to marry up the two. On completion of my PhD study, this record will be destroyed, along with the sound-recording of your interview. Anonymised transcripts will be kept for two years after completion to allow for further publications.

Your comfort is paramount. I will make every attempt to limit any distress apparent during the interview. The interview and topic under discussion is very sensitive, and I therefore advise that you consider arranging access to someone who can provide you with the help and support you may need after the interview. I am not qualified to offer counselling, but the institution in which you currently reside provides such a service.

You may contact me through Alison Little from Programmes.

Many Thanks

Samantha Craven

**Appendix 5 – Consent form for adult survivors**ID Number **Consent Form – Your copy**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) consent to take part in the above study and feel that I have enough information on which to base this decision. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at anytime and that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

I Samantha Craven (researcher) agree to follow the ethical guidelines discussed above in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

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 ID Number 
**Consent Form – Researcher's copy**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) consent to take part in the above study and feel that I have enough information on which to base this decision. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at anytime and that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

I Samantha Craven (researcher) agree to follow the ethical guidelines discussed above in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

**Appendix 6 - Consent form for police officers**ID Number **Consent Form – Your copy**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) consent to take part in the above study and feel that I have enough information on which to base this decision. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at anytime and that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

I Samantha Craven (researcher) agree to follow the ethical guidelines discussed above in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

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 ID Number 
**Consent Form – Researcher's copy**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) consent to take part in the above study and feel that I have enough information on which to base this decision. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at anytime and that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

I Samantha Craven (researcher) agree to follow the ethical guidelines discussed above in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

**Appendix 7 - Consent form for child sex offenders**ID Number **Consent Form – Your copy**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) consent to take part in the above study and feel that I have enough information on which to base this decision. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at anytime and that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

I Samantha Craven (researcher) agree to follow the ethical guidelines discussed above in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

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 ID Number 
**Consent Form – Researcher's copy**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) consent to take part in the above study and feel that I have enough information on which to base this decision. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at anytime and that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

I Samantha Craven (researcher) agree to follow the ethical guidelines discussed above in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

## **Appendix 8 - Debrief sheet for adult survivors**

### **Debrief**

#### **Telephone Helplines:**

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000. (Freephone)

Stop It Now! Helpline: 0808 1000 900 (Freephone)

Childline: 0800 11 11 (24 hour freephone helpline for children and young people)

CRASAC (Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre): 02476 277 777

ROSA (Rape or Sexual Abuse Support): 01788 551151

Helpline Textphone: 0800 056 0566 (This number is for people with hearing difficulties)

#### **Websites:**

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>

<http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/index.htm>

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## **Appendix 9 - Debrief sheet for police officers**

### **Debrief**

#### **Telephone Helplines:**

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000. (Freephone)

Stop It Now! Helpline: 0808 1000 900 (Freephone)

Childline: 0800 11 11 (24 hour freephone helpline for children and young people)

CRASAC (Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre): 02476 277 777

NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood): 0800 085 3330  
(Freephone)

Helpline Textphone: 0800 056 0566 (This number is for people with hearing difficulties)

#### **Websites:**

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>

<http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/index.htm>

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)

**Counselling services are available through the organisation for which you work**

## **Appendix 10 - Debrief sheet for child sex offenders**

### **Debrief**

#### **Telephone Helplines:**

Stop It Now! Helpline: 0808 1000 900 (Freephone)

NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood): 0800 085 3330  
(Freephone)

#### **Websites:**

<http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/index.htm>  
[www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)

**Counselling services are available through the institution in which you reside.  
Please complete the appropriate form available from the Unit Officers.**

## Appendix 11 - Interview schedule for adult survivors

1. Could you first tell me how you feel about taking part in this interview?  
*I will try and check with you about how you are feeling throughout the interview. If you want to stop at any point or if you want a break please say. There is no need for you to wait for me to ask. It is understandable that some of what we shall be talking about may be difficult and it is important that we go at a pace that you are comfortable.*
2. Every victim and survivor has his or her own story, each is individual and important; where would you say your story starts?
3. I would like to spend some time considering what was happening before this point, because one thing that I believe is that an understanding about what is happening is important in the attempt to prevent the sexual abuse happening in the first place. So could you tell me about what was happening in your life before this point? (Home, School, Family, Friends etc)
4. I think that it is also important to take account of how you change over time, as this knowledge may be important in identifying cases where a child is being targeted. So how would you describe yourself as a child before the abuse started? Did your behaviour reflect your feelings?
5. If you're feeling ok would you be able to tell me more about the person who abused you, may be you could start with your earliest memory of this person.
  - a. What was this person's significance or role in your life?
  - b. It would be really useful if you could tell me about your relationship and your interactions with this person before the abuse began.
  - c. I realise this may be difficult, but could you tell me how you felt towards this person before the abuse began.
  - d. If you can remember, could you tell me about the relationship this person had with others in your family, and also those outside the family who had regular contact. What can you remember about their interaction?
  - e. Did this person have an effect on your family dynamics? If so, in what ways?



6. Is there a time that you identify as being when things/your relationship started to change? Could you tell me more about this?
  - a. How long had you known this person before this point?
  - b. Other than at times when this person was being sexually abusive, how did this person treat you?
  - c. Other types of abuse such as emotional and physical abuse often accompany sexual abuse. How was it in your case?
7. This maybe more difficult, but I emphasis that there is no right and wrong answers, I am interested in your experience and your perspective.
  - a. Could you tell me about the events leading up to the first incident of sexual contact?
  - b. Can you remember what this person used to talk to you about?
  - c. What was your understanding about what was happening?
  - d. This must have been a very confusing time. Could you share with me how you were feeling at this time?
  - e. Was your outward behaviour affected by how you were feeling?  
Could you tell me more about this?
8. Did a pattern emerge that you knew meant that sexual contact was inevitable, or were things different each time?
9. Although I do not need specific details, could you tell me did the sexual contact get more invasive over time?
10. This may be a hard question, but feel free to take some time to think about it; could you share with me how you changed during this time, and how was this demonstrated in your behaviour?
11. Sexual contact often occurs unbeknown to anyone else around. I would like to spend sometime considering what you think people would have seen or should have been aware of, that could have signified that something untoward was happening?
  - a. Abusers often try and make their victim feeling guilty about what is happening; this can have an effect on whether children are able to disclose. How did this person maintain your secrecy?
  - b. Could you tell me how the abuse came to a stop in your case?

- c. How did you feel about someone finding out about what was happening?
  - d. As an adult how do you feel about people knowing?
- 12. Sexual grooming behaviour is very similar to innocent well-motivated behaviour; the biggest difference is that sexual grooming is sexually motivated. Do you think that it is possible to identify sexual grooming before sexual contact takes place?
  - a. In your case, is there anything specific that you hoped people would notice that would have caused the abuse to stop?
  - b. Is there anything that someone did that prevented, or temporarily prevented, an incident of sexual contact taking place?
  - c. Did anyone do anything that made it easier for this person to abuse to you?
- 13. As a consequence of being victimised in childhood, do you experience challenges in your adult life?
- 14. What are the most important things you want me to know?
- 15. Now I would like to think more about your transition from victim to survivor. Could you tell me about your experience of this transition?
- 16. What are your strengths that empower you as an adult?
- 17. What advice would you give to policy makers, parents, or children?
- 18. Thinking about moving on from here, how are you feeling?

## **Appendix 12 - Interview schedule for police officers**

1. Could you first tell me how you feel about taking part in this interview?  
*It is important for you to know that you can stop the interview at anytime.*
2. How long have you been working in child protection?
  - a. Where did you work previously?
  - b. What was your route in to child protection?
3. Have you received any training relating to sexual grooming, either specifically or as part of a more general course?
  - a. YES
    - i. Could you tell me more about this training – when, where, with whom, what were you told?
    - ii. Was it informative?
  - b. NO
    - i. Do you wish that you had received training on sexual grooming?
    - ii. Do you think that it is an important aspect in which to train people?
4. What do you understand by the term ‘sexual grooming’?
  - a. From your experience, how would you describe sexual grooming?
  - b. Could you give some examples of what you would consider to be sexual grooming?
5. From your experience, typically at what stage does a child disclose?
  - a. At what stage do you become involved?
  - b. How would you describe victims when they come to you?
  - c. Were there suspicions or suspicious behaviour, if so what?
  - d. Could this behaviour have been identified earlier? Retrospectively, were there things missed that should have signified that a child was being abused?
6. Could you tell me about anything about the family dynamics of the victims you have seen, including the child’s relationship with their parents?
7. Could you tell me about the relationship between the offender and the victim?
  - i. How do victims talk about their abuser?

- ii. How do victims feel towards their abuser?
8. Typically, what tends to be the reaction of the victims family and the community when they are told about the abuse?
  - a. How do parents tend to respond to the abuse?
  - b. Did they have any idea that something was happening?
  - c. What did they think of the offender?
  - d. Do they tend to be suspicious of this individual?
  - e. Could the community or family identify the offender? If not, why no? What was preventing them?
9. Do you meet the offenders as part of your investigation?
  - a. How would you describe them in the interview?
  - b. What are your first impressions?
10. Do you think it is possible to distinguish sexual motivation prior to sexual contact?
  - a. How useful is the concept of sexual grooming in identifying child sexual abuse?
11. Do you deal with many historic cases?
  - a. Do these differ in anyway?
  - b. Would you say that grooming has changed over time?
  - c. Does their abuse/grooming still have an effect on their lives?
12. Are some children more at risk than others? What does this depend on?
13. What stops a child from telling?
14. From your experience, what is it that makes offenders successful at gaining access to child victims?
  - a. What is it that makes offenders successful at gaining the child's compliance and secrecy?
  - b. Is there a difference between offenders caught early in their criminal career and those who are more prolific?
15. Have there been more incidents of sexual grooming reported prior to sexual contact since the introduction of the legislation?
16. What is your opinion on the new legislation 'meeting a child following sexual grooming'? Is it practical or effective?

- a. This legislation was meant to be preventative. Do you believe that it is? Is it possible to convict someone before sexual contact has taken place?
  - b. Is it practically possible to prove sexual intent without prior convictions?
  - c. Does this new legislation enhance prior provision?
  - d. Is there any additional legislation that you would like to see?
17. What is your opinion about the RSHO (risk of sexual harm orders)?
- a. Are they preventative or do they target previous offenders?
  - b. Is it possible to stop people from using the internet by using an RSHO?
  - c. Do they enhance prior provision?
  - d. How easy is it to enforce the RSHOs – do you have enough resources?
18. From your experience, how prevalent is internet grooming?
- a. How much time is spent working on internet related cases compared to face to face cases?
  - b. Do you think it is easier to prove sexual intent when the offender uses the internet? Explain?
19. What approach would you suggest to protect children?
20. What evidence would be sufficient to say that a child was being groomed?
- a. How does the level of evidence required for an RSHO compare to that required for a conviction under Section 15 of SOA 2003?
  - b. As far as you are aware, how much has the new legislation has been used?
21. Is there anything that has particularly surprised you with the cases that you have dealt with?
22. Is there anything that I should have asked you and haven't?

### **Appendix 13 - interview schedule for child sex offenders**

1. First I would like to get some background information.
  - a. Could you tell me a bit about your family?
    - i. Could you tell me a bit about your childhood? (Family & School, Abuse, Bullying)
    - ii. How did you deal with childhood adversity?
    - iii. Do you have or have you had long-term partners?
    - iv. How would you describe that relationship? (Affection, Violence, Children)
  - b. Did you have any particularly important relationships with people as a child?
  - c. How would you describe your self as a child?
  - d. How would you describe your self as an adult, before you committed a sexual offence?
  - e. Could you tell me the types of jobs that you have had since leaving school?
    - i. Did you have any particular reasons for choosing these jobs?
  - f. Did or do you have any other types of involvements or hobbies?
2. Is your current offence your first offence?
  - a. Could you tell me about your offence history? (Sexual and other)
3. Have your life experiences been influential in your offending? What & How?
4. What was life like leading up to your first sexual offence?
5. So that I can get a clearer picture, could you tell me how many children you have abused? This figure may include offences that you have not been convicted for, without meaning I have to report it.
  - a. What was the duration of this abuse?
6. I think that it is best if we first talk about your first offence.
  - a. Could you tell me about you first victim? (Age, gender, duration, their family)
  - b. Why did you choose this child rather than another child? (Retrospective opinion)

- c. I realise that the answer to this question may be different now, but what was your perception of this child at the time? (Retro)
- d. Could you tell me about when you first became sexually attracted to this child?
- e. Can you identify anything that you believe acted as a trigger(s) for you offence(s)?
- f. Could you tell me how you came to have access to this child and got to know them?
  - i. Specifically how did you manage to get time alone with the child?
  - ii. Retrospectively, can you identify patterns in your behaviour relating to access?
- g. How would you describe your relationship with this child?
  - i. How would the child view your relationship?
  - ii. How would others view your relationship with this child?
- h. How did the child respond to your attention?
- i. What made your attempts successful?
- j. There is no need to provide lots of details, but what level of sexual contact did you have with the victim?
  - i. Did this contact progress over time? Expand (Less intrusive to more intrusive)
- k. What was the child's understanding about what was happening?
- l. How did this abuse end? Were you caught? What happened?
- 7. Have you committed further offences?
  - a. Was there a similar pattern with later children?
  - b. Were there any similarities or differences between the child and circumstances with later victims?
- 8. Why did you choose the later victim(s)?
  - a. What factors affected which child you choose?
  - b. There is the belief that child sex offenders are good at identifying vulnerable children. What is your opinion?
  - c. Has this been true in your experience?

- d. Could you tell me if there were any factors or circumstances that facilitated your offending?
  - e. Did anyone, knowingly or unknowingly, facilitate your offending?
- 9. Can you identify anything that you believe acted as a trigger(s) for you offence(s)?
  - a. Were there factors that acted to prevent you from offending either on a particular occasion or with a particular child?
- 10. Some people believe that people that offend against children are not good at relationships with adults others believe the opposite. What is your opinion?
  - a. Did you have to have good relationships to gain access?
- 11. Following first sexual offence what was your emotional reaction to what had happened?
  - a. How did you cope with this?
  - b. What did you think about what you were doing?
  - c. Did you try to stop your self?
  - d. Did you seek help? Was help available?
  - e. Do you think that there may have been a point at which you may have sought help?
  - f. What help would have been useful or acceptable to you at the time?  
(Stop it Now, C of Support)
- 12. Was anyone ever suspicious of your behaviour?
  - a. What happened?
  - b. Did you expect that people should have been suspicious?
  - c. What did you do to allay people's suspicion?
- 13. Did anything surprise you about your experience?
- 14. How did your offending affect other aspects of your life?
- 15. Did your ability to groom your victim(s) prove useful in other aspects of your life?
- 16. Did skills from other aspects of your life prove useful in your ability to groom the victim? (Also retro)
- 17. Do you believe that it is possible to identify sexual grooming?
  - a. Is it possible to identify this before sexual contact has taken place?



- b. Is it possible to identify the sexual intent of grooming behaviour before sexual contact has taken place?
  - c. Have you ever identified sexual grooming behaviour in others?
  - d. Do you believe that sex offenders are better able to identify sexual grooming?
  - e. What advice would you give with regard to better protection of children?
18. Whilst you have been very clear in telling me that you are telling the truth some people would argue that offenders couldn't tell the truth. What would you say to help me answer my critics?
- a. At this point I thought it would be useful to say would you like to add or change anything that you have said?
  - b. Could tell me how you think the stigma associated with sexual offending may affect your future and potential offending?
  - c. Should the public be made more or less aware of sex offenders?
19. Discuss experience of taking part in SOTP and this study as a means leaving the interview with a positive outcome.

## Appendix 14 - Annotated transcript

	509	Interviewer:	Do you think that people should have been more aware that	
	510		something was wrong, because of the behaviour that you were demonstrating?	
	511	<b>Respondent:</b>	Oh yeah I was, I just, I was always in trouble, stealing money,	
	512		hating everything, always in trouble at school um but it was because I had buried	
Infection	513		everything so deeply there was no connection apart from this feeling inside me	Grooming shadow
	514		that there was some sort of massive infection that was something that I couldn't	
	515		even begin to think about, but was there, and then then (laugh) it's funny coz it is	
Continued effects, change of tense	516		either inside and the way I have talked about it before is that the Monty Python	Grooming shadow
	517		foot in the sky, that was the way I am, and then when it came and when it was	
	518		there above me that was like here we go again, coz when the foot appeared that	Grooming shadow
Powerlessness	519		meant that there was trouble ahead and things would get very messy	
	520	Interviewer:	So did trouble start um from the age of 9 onwards um and what	
	521		sort of things should people have noticed. You mentioned stealing money,	
	522		getting in trouble at school; is it those kind of delinquent behaviour you know	
	523		hello I'm	
	524	<b>Respondent:</b>	hum hum. Now, now I can understand it like that. Um but I was	
	525		bright as well and could talk my way out of anything mostly, and then just like	
	526		when and if they really wanted to have a go at me I'd just say come have a go at	
	527		me and then I would pick holes in whatever they were doing. They set us writing	
	528		the dictionary out in detention, for example, um but I found the prelims so I used	
	529		to get detentions for writing the prelims rather beginning with the letter a, and I	
	530		would continue the debate you know and that sort of level and just couldn't settle	
Social comparison	531		into anything, but all the time I had this huge sort of thing about having to be a	Entrapment
	532		catholic boy and all that.	

### **Police analysis**

(include in appendix for interest)

and that's really frustrating because it is always going to be one on one and CPS come back with an advice file...and then they'll say yes charge or sometimes they will say no, you know, we don't think that this is going to go anywhere it is one on one and we don't have any medical evidence corroboration, which can be a huge factor. But if you have got a traumatised child saying this is what happened, I can't, you know 99.9% of what they are telling you is the truth, because there is no way on God's earth that that has come from a film or it is too specific, it is too detailed for them to have made it up or read it in a book. It really frustrates me that despite putting in a file and putting in to words as much as you possibly can, and they have the video interview, the CPS our barristers and solicitors have the videos and the offenders interviews, so they know everything that you know basically, but despite that I don't think that they necessarily get a feel for what has gone on and they are reluctant to push the cases that are a bit border line and where they think that we are really going to struggle on this one and they would rather not prosecute. (Jane)

### **Emotional impact – effect on perspective**

There was also a gender difference in the emotional response to their work. Barry seemed to be less emotionally distressed; he had a different mindset and defines success differently. The female officers were more concerned with the emotional impact on the

victim compared to Barry's primary focus on practicality of the child being protected in the future.

From a police officer's perspective we are just understaffed you know, moral is so low because there is just so much going on and not enough officers and not enough hours in the day and still so much abuse going on. (Jane)

They (the victim) find it very difficult to understand that the police believe what they are saying, but it is not going to court ...and it is very difficult to explain to a child that we believe you, but it's in everybody's interest that this doesn't go any further or we don't think that if it goes to court we are going to get a conviction. (Jane)

The CID officers made it clear that they worked differently from the child protection unit and social services. They were less concerned with the long-term care of the child that was somebody else's concern; they were much more concerned that positive action should be taken as soon as possible and that time shouldn't be wasted on meetings when there are offenders to apprehend.

My issue with CPU is that they are too woolly and fluffy. (John)

There have been many, many battles with social services because they want to do things differently; they are more pink and fluffy perhaps. (Dave)

CID have more success at getting their sexual abuse cases to court, presumably because they are extra-familial offences and easier to prove. This success-failure dichotomy may explain the different response from CID and CPU. CPU need to focus on the child

protection side of policing compared to the apprehending offenders because of the high percentage of failure to get conviction in intra-familial cases.

There was generally a feeling of powerlessness, but that you had to do something.

We have to keep on keeping on, because it is not perfect and it doesn't work perfectly, but it sometimes works so we do catch some, and if we didn't do anything then who knows. (Dave)